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www.publiccounsel.org

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Directing Attorney Consumer Rights

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Public Counsel is the largest *pro bono* public interest law firm in the country. Founded in 1970, it is dedicated to advancing equal justice under law and addressing economic, racial, and other inequities by delivering free legal and social services to the most vulnerable members of our community. Public Counsel operates eight legal projects: Children's Rights, Community Development, Consumer Rights, Homelessness Prevention, Immigrants' Rights, Veterans' Rights, the Audrey Irmes Project for Women & Girls' Rights, and our impact litigation project, Opportunity Under Law. Public Counsel has a full-time staff of over 120. We seek to have a racially inclusive staff.

Public Counsel's Consumer Rights Project is one of the oldest projects within Public Counsel. Our mission is to advance economic justice by providing legal counsel for low-income individuals and their families, addressing inequalities in bargaining power, opposing those who take advantage of the vulnerable, and holding wrongdoers accountable.

Our priority areas are:

- Fraud or unfair business practices
- Criminal justice debt
- Student loan debt
- For-profit school problems
- Predatory lending
- Real estate fraud
- Mortgage servicing abuses and foreclosure
- Financial abuse of an elder or a disabled person
- Debt collection, including creditor harassment, default judgments, and wrongful wage garnishment or bank levies
- Identity theft related to the items listed above
- Employee rights
- Civil Rights

Some of our current cases include the following:

1. *PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Real Estate Fraud*

We have filed two class actions involving the “PACE” program, which was initiated by the federal government and has been adopted by governmental entities in California. The program advertises the ability to get home improvements to make homes more energy efficient, through a “government program.” However, the program has no effective consumer protection requirements and, as a result, many individuals are entering into these agreements based on misrepresentations made and without any analysis that the homeowner will be able to afford the payments. As a result, thousands of low income homeowners are at risk of losing their homes because of increased assessments. The cases are currently pending in the Complex Division of the Los Angeles Superior Court.

2. *VideoSymphony* (student loan debt from for-profit college)

We represent two students on behalf of themselves and a putative class of individuals who were sued to recover on a debt by a former for-profit school owner. We have filed a class action Answer and Cross-Complaint to the debt collection complaints on the ground that there are class-wide defenses and affirmative claims that apply to all similarly situated defendants. The cases are all filed in Los Angeles Superior Court.

3. *Lyons, et al. v. BAIC* (challenge by veterans against attaching their disability benefits)

We represent a number of veterans in two lawsuits pending in the U.S. District Court in South Carolina. Our suits allege that defendants find third party “investors” to lend money to veterans desperate for money, and then arrange to have the money taken directly from the veterans’ VA disability payments, contrary to federal law.

4. *Rodriguez v. City of Los Angeles* (gang injunction removals)

We are currently in the implementation phase of a settlement agreement with the City of Los Angeles. The case was a class action against the City of Los Angeles for serving unconstitutional gang injunctions on purported gang members. As part of the novel settlement, we have 1) a \$30,000,000 Jobs and Education program available to class members; 2) an expedited process for removing names from the gang injunctions, and 3) a tattoo removal process. We are now processing requests for removal from the gang injunction, and securing pro bono counsel for all of the claimants whom the City will not voluntarily remove from the gang injunction.

5. *Criminal Justice Debt* (potential cases)

We are investigating potential litigation regarding numerous aspects of the interaction between debt and the criminal justice, including money bail, fines and fees, and disproportionate

policing of people of color.

JOB SUMMARY

The Directing Attorney of CLP will:

- Supervise CLP staff attorneys, legal assistants and volunteers to provide direct legal services and representation to indigent victims of consumer fraud.
- Litigate a docket of state and federal court cases involving home equity fraud, financial elder abuse, misrepresentations and unfair business practices, auto fraud, criminal fines and fees, employment matters, and civil rights cases.
- Provide legal support a large network of *pro bono* attorneys to handle consumer cases referred by CLP.
- Supervise a bankruptcy sub-project that offers legal advice, resources and referrals to people who have filed or are thinking of filing a bankruptcy petition; assists people who file Chapter 7 petitions *pro se*; and refers Chapter 7 cases to *pro bono* attorneys.
- Engage in public policy and legislative work, with organizations such as the California Reinvestment Coalition and the California Low Income Consumers Coalition, that seek to advance the interests of low-income consumers throughout the state.
- Identify and file impact litigation cases on behalf of low-income individuals.
- Provide litigation advice, counsel, and cocounsel as appropriate with other projects at Public Counsel, on cases including housing, community development, women and girls, children's rights, veterans, immigrants, and others.
- Coordinate with other legal service organizations and government agencies to engage in community education on consumer issues.
- Work with staff members to maintain information and data necessary for funding and other reports, draft and review funding proposals, assist with identifying other funding sources and maintain and cultivate relationships with foundations and other funders.

ESSENTIAL JOB SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED

- Must be a member in good standing of the California Bar, with ten to twenty years of litigation experience that includes trial experience. Familiarity with consumer law desired but not required.
- Excellent leadership qualities, including the ability to lead a diverse team of attorneys, staff, and volunteers.

- Outstanding interpersonal and communications skills, including the ability to act as coordinator in large litigation teams including pro bono counsel, interact with the media and funders, and advocate with relevant influence groups including the legislature.

START DATE AND COMPENSATION

This position is available immediately. Salary is commensurate with abilities and experience. Excellent benefits.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Continuous until position is filled.

TO APPLY

Please send a cover letter and resume to (if applying by email, please put the words “Consumer Directing Attorney” in the subject line):

Margaret Morrow, President & CEO

Public Counsel

610 South Ardmore Avenue

Los Angeles, California 90005

Fax: 213/385-9089

Email: ConsumerJob@publiccounsel.org

No phone calls please.

Public Counsel is an Equal Opportunity Employer

All qualified applicants shall receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, ethnic group identification, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, political affiliation, condition of physical or mental disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, in accordance with requirements of Federal and State laws.

All qualified applicants with criminal histories will be considered in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Los Angeles Fair Chance Initiative for Hiring.