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# The Pro Bono Collaborative Project Spotlight: Increasing Access To Justice Just Got A Little Easier In Rhode Island 10-05-2017

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October 5, 2017

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## **Project Spotlight**

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*The Pro Bono Collaborative periodically spotlights one project or issue as a way to keep our volunteers and supporters aware of and engaged in PBC projects and local access to justice initiatives.*

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Judah Rome, Esq. (RWU Law '16), Stephen Prignano, Esq., and Rita Nerney, Esq. (RWU Law 16)

## Increasing Access to Justice Just Got a Little Easier in Rhode Island

A major challenge in recruiting attorneys to take on pro bono matters can be boiled down to the old expression, *in for a penny, in for a pound*. As of May 23, 2017, you can be in for a penny and sometimes a penny is all someone needs when it comes to legal representation.

Limited scope in representation with guidance and rules debuted in May when the Rhode Island Supreme Court issued an order provisionally amending the Rules of Professional Conduct to expand upon the existing rules regarding the limited scope representation of clients: <https://www.courts.ri.gov/Courts/SupremeCourt/SupremeMiscOrders/ProvisionalRules-LimitedScopeRepresentation-RI-5-23-17.pdf>

For the Pro Bono Collaborative and access to justice advocates in Rhode Island, this was a huge win. The PBC Advisory Board and the RI Bar Association submitted comments pursuant to the Rhode Island Supreme Court's Order dated June 8, 2015 urging the Court to adopt rules making limited scope representation a real option in Rhode Island in order to facilitate increased access to legal assistance for those unable to afford full representation and to encourage the provision of pro bono legal service.

As stated in the PBC Advisory Board's Comments: "It is no exaggeration to say that there has never been a more pressing need for *pro bono* legal services than at present, nor has there been a wider gulf between that need and the availability of *pro bono* services. ... If Rhode Island attorneys can easily and predictably participate in limited scope representation, there will almost certainly be greater *pro bono* participation by the bar [which] narrow[s] the gap between the demand for effective *pro bono* services and its supply."

***Special thanks to PBC Advisory Board member Stephen Prignano, Esq. and RWU Law alums Rita Nerney, Esq. and Judah Rome, Esq. for their work researching and drafting the Comments.***

We look forward to introducing you to expanded opportunities for providing pro bono legal services under these new rules.

## **About the PBC**

The PBC staff identifies and develops pro bono projects that appeal to transactional and business attorneys, facilitates ongoing pro bono projects and works to increase access to justice. The PBC is not a referral program, but instead matches law firms with community organizations to provide pro bono legal assistance in a specific area of law. [Read more about the PBC...](#)

***If you are an attorney and would like to get involved in this or any other PBC project, we would love to hear from you.***

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