



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid Announces Danielle Shelton Walczak as New Executive Director

(MINNEAPOLIS, MN – NOVEMBER 5, 2021) Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA) has named Danielle Shelton Walczak as its new executive director overseeing the agency’s efforts to bring civil legal assistance to people throughout twenty counties in central Minnesota including Hennepin County. Walczak is a veteran of the local legal community and most recently served as the City of Minneapolis’ Director of Strategic Initiatives where she oversaw the divisions of Race & Equity, Sustainability, Human Trafficking, Arts Culture and the Creative Economy, and the north Minneapolis Promise Zone.

“Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid does the work that has been important to me for my entire career – providing voice to the voiceless, access and opportunities to people in society who don’t easily have those options,” Walczak said. “My ambitious goal is to grow the capacity of Legal Aid so we don’t ever have to turn away anyone who qualifies for our services.”

MMLA was founded more than 100 years ago and today receives more than 100,000 calls for service each year.

“In Danielle, we found the type of visionary leader who brings a vast knowledge of the law and how law and society interact and how we can help those who are most vulnerable and in need navigate this,” said Rachhana T. Srey, MMLA Board Chair. “Danielle’s varied work and leadership experiences, relationship building skills, and strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion will help hone our mission and guide our staff.”

Walczak succeeds former executive director Drew Schaffer and will oversee a staff of 185 lawyers, paralegals, and other team members who provide services to those in need free of charge.

“After the murder of George Floyd, I don’t think any organization, particularly in Minnesota, can afford to be tone deaf to the cries for racial justice and the imperative to dismantle antiracist systems and exhibit antiracist behaviors.” Walczak said. “These cries don’t just exist in the communities we serve, they exist among those who work in and with those communities, and all of us who simply care about our client communities and humanity as a whole.”

MMLA has seen an exciting mix of new methods to deliver justice over the past year and break down barriers to justice, including the introduction of new legal kiosks and web portals as well

as the Justice Bus, a mobile legal clinic that travels the area to provide legal services where needed.

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About MMLA: Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and a partner in the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition. Our attorneys, staff, and volunteers handle civil legal matters for Minnesota's most vulnerable people for no charge. In addition to direct legal representation, we work with policy makers, advocating equal rights and equal protections under the law. Each year, MMLA receives more than 100,000 calls for legal help. We closed more than 10,000 cases in 2019 alone. The mission of MMLA is to advocate for the legal rights of disadvantaged people to have safe, healthy, and independent lives in strong communities. For more information, please visit mylegalaid.org. Media inquiries can be directed to MMLA Deputy Director of Operations Lisa Cohen at 612-746-3770 or lcohen@mylegalaid.org.