

LAW & SOCIAL POLICY

★ LEGACY AWARD ★

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 23, 2023

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New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty Named 2023 Law & Social Policy Legacy Award Winner

\$10,000 awarded to organization working to advance low-wage workers' rights

WASHINGTON — Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF) today named the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (NMCLP) the recipient of the 2023 Law & Social Policy Legacy Award.

Established in 2020, the annual award recognizes organizations defending and advocating for low-wage workers' rights and aims to increase knowledge of this work in the philanthropic community.

NMCLP was selected based on its strong record of advancing systemic change for low-wage workers in New Mexico through litigation, policy advocacy, education, and community engagement. For over 25 years, NMCLP has worked directly with workers and community groups to build a powerful, collaborative movement for lasting change. In the process, it has notched historic victories for low-wage workers that helped extend basic rights to farmworkers, improve enforcement of wage theft laws, and usher in the state's first statewide paid sick leave law.

"We are incredibly honored to be the 2023 recipient of the Law & Social Policy Award," said Sireesha Manne, executive director of NMCLP. "The award and recognition will help us build even more momentum and support as we continue to work with the community to advance economic justice in New Mexico."

NMCLP was one of eight strong nominations for the \$10,000 award. Nominees were evaluated on three criteria: significance, collaborative approach, and systemic impact.

NMCLP excels in each of these categories; its work has significantly improved low-wage workers' lives, involves direct and sustained collaboration with workers and community leaders, and has systemically transformed the state's system for workers' compensation and wage protection.

La Semilla Food Center, a close partner of NMCLP, nominated the organization for the award.

"The selection committee was inspired by NMCLP's community-centered approach in achieving historic victories for the state's farmworkers and low-wage workers," said Cema Siegel, co-director of EOF. "Its commitment to not only securing important policy change but working with communities to ensure successful implementation is an inspiring model that deserves broader recognition."

For years, NMCLP has worked with community partners, families, and workers to protect workers' rights and obtain important resources. In 2016, after years of litigation, NMCLP secured a historic legal victory that ended the exclusion of agricultural laborers from the state's workers' compensation system. This change has helped thousands of farm, ranch, and dairy workers who are injured on the job access medical care to treat job-related injuries or illnesses, financial assistance while recovering and waiting to return to work, and lifelong disability payments for those who cannot return to work. This decision provides a strong legal basis to address other worker exclusions from the law.

NMCLP has also used litigation and advocacy to improve the state's enforcement of wage theft laws, asserting the rights of thousands of workers to recover lost or stolen pay essential for meeting their families' basic needs. Additionally, NMCLP supported community members and advocates in a campaign that won New Mexico's first statewide paid sick leave law, promoting workers' health and protecting their income when they need time off due to illness or related medical issues.

More recently, NMCLP and partners worked to ensure that New Mexico's agricultural workers have access to important income and safety protections, including personal protective equipment, testing, and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In all its work, NMCLP engages in a robust community lawyering model that centers the priorities, leadership, and experiences of the people most impacted by policy decisions. NMCLP collaborates with families and community leaders to support them with building power and to advance change on issues prioritized by New Mexico's families and workers.

NMCLP will be recognized and receive the award at EOF's [2023 Annual Budget and Tax Briefing](#) on April 20. The \$10,000 [Law & Social Policy Award](#) will be given by EOF with support from the Public Welfare Foundation annually until 2030 as a part of its legacy investment in advancing workers' rights. Previous winners of the award include the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP) and Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM).

Learn more about NMCLP at www.nmpovertylaw.org.

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Established in 1992, [Economic Opportunity Funders](#) (formerly known as GIST), is a network of national, regional and local level funders working to advance economic equity and opportunity in the United States. We believe in building an economy that works for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, education, income, religion, gender identity, disability, or age. We support a strong public sector and policies that create a healthy, fair and just economy where opportunity and prosperity are broadly shared.

EOF focuses its work in three key and intersecting areas: poverty and opportunity, protecting and supporting workers, and tax and budget policies. We provide a platform for funders to share information, exchange ideas and best practice, and collaborate around identified areas of interest.