

# THE BALTIMORE Barrister

DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026

VOL 16 | NO 1



Young Lawyers' Division – Children's Holiday Party for Families in Shelters CBS-Baltimore Morning Show Interview

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY BY THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF BALTIMORE CITY

# The McCammon Group

is pleased to welcome our newest Neutral



## **Hon. Michele D. Hotten (Ret.)**

*Retired Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland*

The Honorable Michele D. Hotten recently retired after nine years of distinguished service as a Justice on the Supreme Court of Maryland. She previously served as a Judge on the Court of Special Appeals of Maryland and as an Associate Judge on the Circuit Court and District Court for Prince George's County. Before her service on the bench, Justice Hotten enjoyed a successful law practice and served Prince George's County as an Assistant State's Attorney, the Examiner in Chancery, and Deputy People's Zoning Counsel. A Fellow of the Maryland Bar Foundation, Justice Hotten is a Past President of the J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association, Prince George's County Bar Association, and Alan Goldstein Inns of Court. In 2023, she received the Women's Bar Association of Maryland's Rita C. Davidson Award and J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association's President's Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions. Justice Hotten now brings this exceptional record of leadership and accomplishment to The McCammon Group to serve the mediation, arbitration, and special master needs of lawyers and litigants in Maryland, DC, and beyond.

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# Reflection and Preview

*The Honorable Evelyn Lombardo Cusson, President, Bar Association of Baltimore City*



I hope that everyone is having a safe and joyful holiday season that presents opportunities for connection and rest.

The Bar Association continues its seasonal traditions. Beginning with National Adoption Day, twenty-six children ranging from ten months to eight years joined their forever families at a Saturday ceremony at the Circuit Court. Special thanks to Administrative Judge Audrey J. S. Carrión, Judge Charles Blomquist, Judge Myshala E. Middleton, Kerri Smith, and Ashley Ward for their efforts to bring this truly worthy event to fruition. The children and their families appreciated hospitality and gifts from the Bar Association. Thank you to Planet Depos for sponsoring the event.

During Thanksgiving week, we celebrated our past presidents at a packed luncheon at the Lord Baltimore Hotel. We honored Viola Woolums, Domonique Flowers, Judge Martin Welch, and Judge Ellen Hollander with awards, and enjoyed their remarks which echoed the importance of mentorship and collegiality nurtured through the bar association.

So far in December, we availed ourselves of friends and fellowship at our annual holiday party, sponsored by Veritext and Maronick Law. Special thanks to Divya Potdar for spearheading. The association also spread cheer at the Young Lawyers' Division holiday party for families living in shelters. We shared a hot meal and entertained over 200 guests and were featured on WJZ-TV and WBAL. Kudos to our new communications and events manager Kate Cornell. I want to also especially acknowledge Kerri Smith, who rivals Santa's workshop of elves and ensures that every child receives a present.

As always, the new year has much to offer. We are surveying our solo and small firm members to gather feedback on how the association can give greater support. Please provide your responses, as we will follow up.

In coordination with Senior Legal Services and Johns Hopkins, the Bar Association is hosting a senior estate planning clinic on Saturday, January 17, to prepare free wills, advance medical directives, and financial powers of attorney. Please contact Nicholas Pycha at [npycha@baltimorebar.org](mailto:npycha@baltimorebar.org) and Sophia Barilone at [sbarilone@mdlab.org](mailto:sbarilone@mdlab.org) if you would like to volunteer.

We continue to provide educational opportunities and are planning a Nuts-and-Bolts trial practice program in the Spring, covering opening and closing arguments, direct and cross examination, and presentation of evidence and objections. We

need volunteers to teach. We will also host our second annual bench bar conference, featuring timely topics for District and Circuit Court practitioners. Please attend, encourage others to attend – especially our newer attorneys, and offer your expertise to make these programs a success.

I am thankful for our growing membership and for the association's sponsors, and for the opportunity to continue to serve as the president of the bar association. I would also like to express special appreciation for our executive director Natalie Foster. In a few short months, Natalie is making her mark on the association through thoughtful leadership and diligence. I witness Natalie working days, nights, and weekends to advance our mission. If you have not already, I hope that you will welcome Natalie and offer your support during this time of transition and growth.

Be well and happy new year!



## NOTICE FROM THE BABC

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Bar Association of Baltimore City, you are hereby notified of the Association's Nominating Committee comprised of:

The Honorable Teresa Epps Cummings, Chair  
 Divya Yost Potdar, Esq.  
 Sarah Belardi, Esq.  
 Sophia Barilone, Esq.  
 Viola Woolums, Esq.  
 Letam Duson, Esq.  
 Brittney J. Gause Dunklow, Esq.

The Committee will meet Tuesday, February 10 at 5:00 pm to interview and nominate candidates for these positions:

- President-Elect
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- ABA Delegate
- Two Board of Governors positions
- Three elected members to the executive council who are not young lawyers

Members interested in the positions above mentioned, should submit a letter of intent and resume to Hon. Teresa Epps Cummings, Chair, Nominating Committee, The Bar Association of Baltimore City, 111 N. Calvert Street, Suite 627, Baltimore, MD 21202, or submit electronically to [nfoster@baltimorebar.org](mailto:nfoster@baltimorebar.org). Resumes must be received no later than 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2026. Please indicate the position in which you have an interest.

Secretary  
 The Bar Association of Baltimore City

# YLD Bar Report (December 2025)

Young Lawyers' Division Update

*Derek Van De Walle, Esq., Chair, Young Lawyers' Division, Bar Association of Baltimore City*



December is always a busy month, and before we all scatter to our end-of-year obligations (or push those obligations into the new year), I want to pause and extend some sincere thanks.

First, to our generous sponsors for the Holiday Party for Children Living in Shelters (in no particular order): Diva Law; CRC Salomon; Minnesota Lawyers' Mutual Insurance; Ellison Sadri; Gordon Feinblatt; Goodell DeVries Leech & Dann; Rosenberg Martin Greenberg; Offit Kurman; and the many, many individual donors (too many to list here, but each deeply appreciated). Also, a special thank you to Kerri Smith, who provides gifts for the children each year. Your support makes this event possible every season.

Second, to members of the YLD Council, whose work this fall has been extraordinary: Maria Bermudez Wharton and Zachary Babo for planning and assembling the Children's Holiday Party from the ground up, as well as a food donation event; Jeff Sadri and TJ Creevy for leading the fundraising efforts that power that party; Christina Araviakis and Raelyn Shuh for coordinating a steady stream of engaging, well-attended membership events; Elizabeth Caldera and Michael Spanos for delivering thoughtful and practical CLE programming; and Samantha Pearl for revitalizing our social media presence, including much-needed updates to our YLD LinkedIn page (which I encourage you to follow, see QR code below).

Thank you all for your hard work, creativity, and enthusiasm. The YLD is strong because of you.

Wishing everyone a warm and restful holiday season.



Follow the YLD's LinkedIn page by scanning the QR Code.



NOTICE OF THE YOUNG LAWYERS' DIVISION

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Bar Association for Baltimore City, Young Lawyers' Division, you are hereby notified of the Association's Nominating Committee comprised of:

Rachel Samakow Esq. (Chair)  
 Kerri Smith, Esq.  
 Sam Pulver, Esq.  
 Lauren Lake Esq.  
 Maria B. Wharton Esq.  
 Sarah Belardi Esq.  
 Kiernan Waters Esq.

The Committee will meet in late January or early February to interview and nominate candidates for the positions of **Chair-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, Elected Member, three Members-at-Large positions.**

Members interested in the positions above mentioned should scan this QR code to fill out an application.



If you have questions, please reach out to Natalie Foster at [nfoster@baltimorebar.org](mailto:nfoster@baltimorebar.org).

**Applications must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 23, 2026.**

# Senior Legal Services Estate Planning Clinic Delivers Essential Legal Aid to Baltimore Seniors

*Nicholas Pycha, Esq., Director, Senior Legal Services*



On December 4, 2025, Senior Legal Services (SLS) continued its mission of providing vital legal assistance to Baltimore's older adults during a highly successful Estate Planning Clinic held at the Baltimore Rowing Center. This event marked one of four key clinics organized through our enduring partnership with Constellation.

For many seniors, the cost of private legal counsel makes estate planning inaccessible, leaving them vulnerable to uncertainty regarding their health and assets. This clinic bridged that gap, offering high-quality, free legal assistance in a supportive environment. Volunteer attorneys worked one-on-one with clients to navigate sensitive topics, drafting essential life-planning documents that provide security for the future.

Volunteers engaged in counseling clients to draft **Last Wills and Testaments**, ensuring their legacies are preserved and their wishes honored. They prepared **Financial Powers of Attorney**, a crucial tool for preventing elder financial abuse and ensuring stability, and executed **Advance Medical Directives** to give clients a voice in their future healthcare decisions.

**Impact by the Numbers:** The success of the day was driven by the dedication of our legal community. We are proud to report the following outcomes:

- 11 Volunteer Attorneys participated
- 13 Seniors served
- 13 Wills prepared
- 8 Powers of Attorney drafted
- 9 Advance Medical Directives executed
- **Total: 30** Estate Planning Documents completed

## Call for Volunteers: Upcoming Clinic at Johns Hopkins

There is no better way to begin 2026 than by making a tangible difference in the lives of our city's seniors. As we turn the page to a new year, Senior Legal Services invites you to join us for our next major community event – an Estate Planning Clinic hosted in partnership with **Johns Hopkins**.

This clinic offers a unique opportunity to connect with the community and provide peace of mind to seniors who often have nowhere else to turn.

### Event Details:

- **Date:** Saturday, January 17, 2026
- **Location:** Glass Pavilion at Levering Hall (3400 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218)

A **Meaningful Pro Bono Opportunity:** This clinic offers a hands-on opportunity to provide direct representation to clients in a

single day. We are looking for volunteers to conduct interviews and draft essential estate documents (Last Will and Testaments, Powers of Attorney, and Advance Medical Directives). This is an excellent environment for attorneys of all experience levels.

**No prior estate planning experience is required.** SLS ensures that every volunteer is set up for success by providing comprehensive templates and having experienced mentors on-site to guide you through the process. It is a fantastic way to earn pro bono hours, network with colleagues, and leave with the satisfaction of having secured a client's legacy.

**How to Get Involved:** To reserve your spot and help us start the year with a commitment to service, please contact **Nicholas G. Pycha** at [Npycha@baltimorebar.org](mailto:Npycha@baltimorebar.org) or call our office at **410-396-1322**.

Join us in making January a month of impact!



## SENIOR ESTATE PLANNING CLINIC – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

**Baltimore City** seniors age 60+ are invited to the **Glass Pavilion at Levering Hall** (3400 N. Charles St. Baltimore, MD 21218) at **Johns Hopkins University** on **Saturday January 17, 2026** from **11 a.m. – 4 p.m.** for a day of free legal services

### Volunteers needed to help clients with:

- Crafting a **will** to allow next of kin to handle passing smoothly
- Organizing an **advance medical directive file** which tells healthcare providers what end of life medical treatment is best for clients
- Creating a **Financial Power of Attorney** document to name a financial agent to make decisions if clients are not able to make them on their own

Volunteers of all experience levels are welcome! Comprehensive training will be provided prior to the start of the clinic, and support staff will be available to assist throughout the event.

**Questions? Interested in volunteering? Contact Nicholas Pycha at [npycha@baltimorebar.org](mailto:npycha@baltimorebar.org) or 410-396-1322.**



THE BALTIMORE BAR FOUNDATION  
PRESENTS



# DINE FOR A DIFFERENCE

## WHEN:

Wednesday,  
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1:30 p.m. (lunch) AND 5–8  
p.m. (dinner)



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Friday,  
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The Family Law Committee and Bar  
Association of Baltimore City Present:

## BEYOND THE SPECTRUM:

*Navigating Divorce and Custody  
Cases Involving Children with Autism*

**Speakers:**

Nancy Grimm, RN, Esq.  
Curtis Cooper, Esq.  
Josef Passley, Ph.D.

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February 5, 2026  
12:30-1:30 p.m.

Via Zoom

Link provided after  
registration

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## Cabaret and Cabernet

November 5, 2025

Senior Legal Services (SLS) and The Baltimore Bar Foundation (BBF) welcomed members and friends of the BABC to Westminster Hall for the 11th Annual Cabaret and Cabernet, an evening of unforgettable musical performances. The event celebrated our dedicated volunteers – giving them the recognition and support they deserve – while raising funds for SLS.





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## Continuing Legal Education: “Confronting Bad History”

November 12, 2025

Guest speaker Frank Gorman, Esq. shared the history behind the extraordinary 1990s case seeking to exhume the remains of John Wilkes Booth. Mr. Gorman represented Green Mount Cemetery in opposing the exhumation, and he wrote a book, *Confronting Bad History: How a Lost Cause and a Fraudulent Book Caused the John Wilkes Booth Exhumation Trial*, to tell the story of the trial and history. In his book, Mr. Gorman explores the legacy of Lincoln’s assassination and one of the most unusual legal battles in American history.



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## Young Lawyers' Division Yappy Hour

November 13, 2025

Thanks to all who came out to Yappy Hour at M8 Beer! We had fantastic turnout, and it was great to see so many members and their pups enjoying the evening. A huge thank you to Bobby Zirkin for his interesting and informative presentation on dog bite law. Congratulations to Nala for winning the Yappy Hour Costume Contest! Thank you also for the donations to Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS)!



## Maryland Bar Attorney Swearing in Ceremony November 20 & 21, 2025

The Maryland Bar welcomed its newest attorneys at the Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building, where they were sworn in by the Supreme Court of Maryland. The ceremony also provided a valuable opportunity to connect with and recruit our newest BABC members, whom we look forward to getting to know in the new year.



# National Adoption Day

November 22, 2025

Baltimore City Department of Social Services, Circuit Court for Baltimore City and Bar Association of Baltimore City hosted National Adoption Day at the Baltimore City Circuit Court where twenty-six children and parents became official families. We cherish these new united families' smiles and milestones every year.



## Past Presidents' Luncheon

November 25, 2025

Members gathered to celebrate the BABC's former leaders as well as multiple award winners at the Past Presidents' luncheon on November 25.

Congratulations to our recipients:

**Presidential Award:** Domonique Flowers

**Presidential Award (YLD):** Viola Woolums

**Paul A. Dorf Memorial ADR Awardee:** Judge Martin P. Welch

**Margaret Brent/Juanita Jackson Mitchell Award:** Judge Ellen Lipton Hollander



## YLD Holiday Food Drive

December 1, 2025

YLD Volunteers gathered at Gallagher, LLP with The Baltimore Hunger Project to collect and sort food donations. These volunteers made a direct and lasting impact this holiday season assisting families experiencing food insecurity in Baltimore.



# Annual Holiday Party

December 3, 2025

BABC members enjoyed an evening of food, drink, music, silent auction prizes and holiday spirit at our annual holiday party at The Inn at Henderson's Wharf.

Thank you to our event sponsors, Maronick Law and Veritext Legal Solutions!



# Young Lawyers' Division Holiday Party for Children Living in Shelters

December 9, 2025

Over 200 guests from shelters across the Baltimore Metro Area received the celebration they deserved at the Young Lawyers' Division Children's Holiday Party for Families in Shelters at the Maryland Science Center. Our volunteers and sponsors provided an unforgettable experience for our attendees. We even made our media debut on WJZ and WBAL! Thank you to our generous individual donors and law firm sponsors Gordon Feinblatt LLC, Diva Law, LLC, Goodell, Devries, Leech and Dann, LLP and Saul Ewing, LLP!



# Member Spotlight

## YLD Spotlight



### Marcos Lopez

1L, the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

#### *Tell us a little about yourself.*

Prior to coming to law school, I served as an Army Ranger. After completing my service, I earned an MBA and spent two years at Freddie Mac working in mortgage finance. I've taken Arnold Schwarzenegger's adage, "Be useful" to heart, and it's important to me that my work has a meaningful, positive impact on the

lives of everyday people. As a future lawyer, I want clients to see me as a trusted problem-solver who can guide them through their toughest challenges.

#### *What areas of law are you most interested in, and why?*

As a 1L, I know there's still a lot I haven't been exposed to, but I'm particularly interested in litigation. I enjoy the challenge and craft of trial advocacy, and I'm drawn to the opportunity to make a direct impact as the person "in the arena." To build courtroom skills early, I

joined the Thurgood Marshall Trial Team at Maryland Carey Law and I volunteer with the Maryland Youth & the Law (MYLaw) Teen Court diversion program.

#### *How do you stay motivated during the challenges of law school?*

It's easy to get swept up in the day-to-day demands of law school, but zooming out helps me keep everything in perspective. An old Ranger Team Leader used to tell me, "It always could be worse." In law school, no one is shooting at us, the professors aren't permitted to hit us, and the assignments aren't going to jump out and bite us. While law school is challenging, it's not the hardest thing I've done. I stay motivated by remembering that every lecture, case brief, and writing assignment, brings me one step closer to becoming a competent advocate.

#### *Who has been an influential mentor or role model in your legal journey? (How have they shaped your perspective?)*

At Maryland Carey Law, Dean Russell McClain has been an invaluable mentor. He taught the summer pre-orientation program I attended, which introduced the fundamentals of law school and gave me a preview of what to expect. By having us engage with real case material and by facilitating Socratic exchanges, Dean McClain helped me start the fall semester with confidence and momentum. As a first-generation college student, Dean McClain's fatherly advice has been key to my initial success.

## Meet the BABC President, Evelyn Lombardo Cusson



Evelyn Lombardo Cusson is a judge on the Circuit Court for Baltimore County. Prior to joining the bench, she served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Maryland where she represented the United States in civil matters and prosecuted white collar criminal cases. She also represented businesses and individuals in private practice. Judge Cusson has been a member of the BABC since 2016, and has served as

chair of the Communications and News Journal Committee, member of the MSBA Board of Governors, and member of the Executive Council. When she is not in court, Judge Cusson enjoys spending time with her spouse and son, ice skating, and watching youth soccer games.

#### *As you begin your term as President of the Bar Association of Baltimore City, what are your priorities for the year ahead?*

In coordination with the Executive Council, I have developed several key priorities, namely orienting our new Executive Director, Natalie Foster, reinstating our mentor mentee program, increasing training opportunities for our members, and enhancing engagement with our membership through education and social opportunities.

#### *What experiences – personal or professional – have most shaped your leadership style?*

I have been fortunate in my career to work with teams and appreciate the strengths and perspectives that others bring to bear. My leadership style is collaborative and driven by the mission and values of the association to serve the Baltimore legal community.

#### *The BABC serves a diverse community of attorneys. How do you plan to support new lawyers and strengthen engagement across generations of the bar?*

One of the most impactful experiences in my career is mentorship. I have benefited from having been mentored early on as a law clerk through today. It is so important for new lawyers to have mentors for coaching and to develop professionalism. I have also been enriched by helping other lawyers through mentorship. The BABC provides a helpful context for mentoring for newer attorneys and for more seasoned attorneys to give back.

#### *When you're not practicing law or leading the BABC, how do you unwind or recharge?*

I am an adult figure skater and feel accomplished after a session at the rink. I also enjoy reading fiction and listening to audio books. I love spending time with my spouse and cheering on my son's soccer teams.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST: Lights on the Courthouse

Derek Van De Walle, Esq., Historical Chair

### Holiday lights on the Mitchell Courthouse? Not quite.

This postcard depicts the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse (then known simply as the Baltimore City Courthouse) illuminated by thousands of electric lights. But the occasion wasn't the holidays. The building was decorated for the Baltimore Jubilee of 1906, a week-long celebration marking the City's recovery from the Great Fire of 1904.

Post-dated September 29, 1906, the card bears a handwritten note:

*"Dear Katharine: This is one of my night pictures taken during the Jubilee and [undecipherable] House Week, Sept. 9-16, 1906. This is the Court House and was decorated with 4000 lights. Lovingly, Nellie."*

"Nellie's" return address – 841 West Fayette Street in the Poppleton neighborhood – places her just west of downtown Baltimore. As this image was apparently taken by Nellie herself, it may be a one-of-a-kind glimpse of the Courthouse during one of the City's brightest celebrations.



*Dear Katharine:  
This is one of my  
night pictures  
taken during  
the Jubilee and  
Old Home Week,  
Sept. 9-16, 1906.  
This is the Court  
House and was  
decorated with  
4000 lights.  
Lovingly,  
Nellie,*

*841 W. Fayette, Balto., Md.*

Postcard from the private collection of Derek M. Van De Walle.

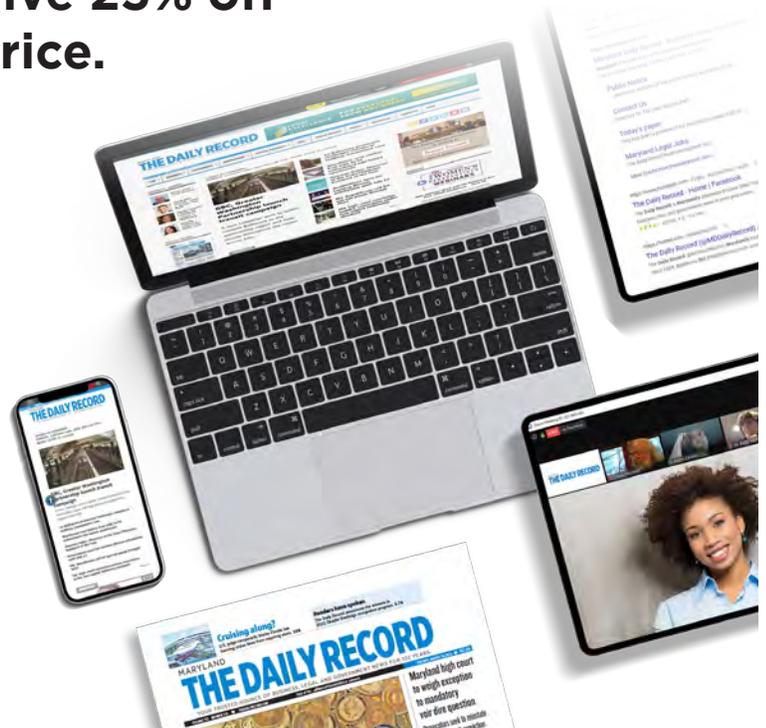


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