



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Karlene Dennis  
Executive Director  
[kdennis@nycourts.gov](mailto:kdennis@nycourts.gov)

**Date: January 14, 2026**

### **Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission Honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. With Month of Service Across NYS**

**NEW YORK**—In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and his legacy of service, each January, the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission will host a series of programs across New York State. These programs will bring together members of the legal and judicial community, students, and the public to expand access to justice, promote civic engagement, and support underserved populations.

“The Williams Commission’s Month of Service reflects our commitment to racial and ethnic fairness in the courts and our dedication to the people and institutions the courts exist to serve,” said FHW Co-Chair Hon. Shirley Troutman, Associate Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. FHW Co-Chair Hon. Troy K. Webber, Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, added, “These programs embody Dr. King’s enduring commitment to justice, service, equity, and community empowerment.”

Inspired by Dr. King’s sermon, *The Drum Major Instinct*, in which he said, “Everybody can be great... because everybody can serve,” the Month of Service will be an annual initiative of the Williams Commission. Programs include providing meals to those experiencing homelessness, educational and leadership programs for youth and adults, and free legal services that address the needs of marginalized populations.

This year, Williams Commission–led programs will take place in Buffalo, Syracuse, and Westchester, with two co-sponsored programs in New York City. The Williams Commission is appreciative of its partners in supporting these initiatives and helping bring programs to communities across the State. The initiative reflects Dr. King’s vision by connecting the courts, law schools, and the public in meaningful service and community engagement.

**Pre-registration is required for the programs. Key programs and events in this year’s Month of Service series include:**

#### Careers in the Courts at Williamsville East High School – Eighth Judicial District

**January 13** – As part of the Williams Commission’s Adopt-A-School Program, and in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a panel of legal professionals and court employees will discuss diverse pathways and careers in the courts with high school students. The program will take place at Williamsville East High School, 151 Paradise Rd., East Amherst, NY 14051.

Free Legal Services at Queens County Civil Court – Eleventh Judicial District

**January 15** – The NYS Unified Court System – Office of Statewide Civic Engagement, in collaboration with the Williams Commission and the Ronald H. Brown Center for Civil Rights at St. John's Law School, will offer free legal assistance from St. John's Law School students under the supervision of attorneys. The program will take place at Queens County Civil Court, 89-17 Sutphin Blvd, Jamaica, NY 11435.

PB&J Drive at Canisius University – Eighth Judicial District

**January 19** – Canisius University students will provide meals to individuals experiencing homelessness through partnerships with local community groups. This initiative reflects a shared commitment to dignity, compassion, and community care. The event will take place at Canisius University, in the Winter Student Center, Room #205, 2001 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14208.

Contributing to Justice: Making an Impact in the Courtroom and Beyond – Fifth Judicial District

**January 23** – The Williams Commission will partner with Syracuse University College of Law and the Black Law Student Association (BLSA) for a hybrid program, which will focus on nontraditional and traditional career paths, and how legal training can be used to serve its communities beyond the courtroom. The program will begin at 4:30 PM, online, and in-person, at Syracuse University College of Law, Dineen Hall, Room 020, 950 Irving Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244.

Free Legal Services at Suffolk County Court – Tenth Judicial District

**January 23** – The NYS Unified Court System Office of Statewide Civic Engagement, in collaboration with the Williams Commission, the Supreme Court of Suffolk County, and Touro Law Center will host a day of serve to promote civic engagement and volunteerism. Volunteer law students will assist court users in completing forms required for uncontested divorce cases, child or spousal support cases, custody and visitation, and name change applications. The program will take place between 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM in the Central Jury Room of Cohalan Court Complex, 400 Carleton Avenue, Central Islip, NY 11722.

Free Legal Services for Court Users at Buffalo Surrogate's Court – Eighth Judicial District

**January 28** -- The Williams Commission in collaboration with the NYS Unified Court System Office of Statewide Civic Engagement and University at Buffalo School of Law, will provide free legal assistance to the public by students under the supervision of licensed attorneys. Services will be provided in the areas of uncontested divorces, Family Court, Housing Court, Surrogate's Court issues, name changes, as well as information regarding the Clean Slate Act. Services will be provided at Erie County Surrogate's Court, 92 Franklin Street, Buffalo, NY 14202.

FHW Bridge to Justice – Youth Empowerment & Engagement Initiative – Ninth Judicial District

**January 31** – The Williams Commission will host a program dedicated to youth engagement, the community, and empowerment. The forum will bring young people and community leaders for interactive groups, panel discussions and leadership development. The program will take place from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM, at New York Covenant Church, 500 Main Street, New Rochelle, New York 10801.

For more information about the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission, please visit our website at [www.nycourts.gov/FHW](http://www.nycourts.gov/FHW).

# # #