

Dykema's Heidi Naasko Wins State Bar of Michigan's Cummiskey Award for Pro Bono Service

Detroit – June 22, 2020 – Dykema, a leading national law firm, announced today that its Pro Bono Counsel, Heidi Naasko, was selected to receive the State Bar of Michigan's John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award for 2020. The award is typically presented at the State Bar of Michigan's Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for Sept. 17, 2020, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

According to the State Bar of Michigan, the purpose of the Cummiskey Award is to foster awareness of the need for involvement of the private bar in delivering legal services to the poor, by giving public recognition each year to a Michigan lawyer who has made a significant pro bono contribution to this effort. The award is established in the name of John W. Cummiskey of Grand Rapids, a leading advocate and activist in the cause of making legal services available to all, without regard to economic status. Past Dykema honorees of the Cummiskey Pro Bono Award include Joel Kellman (2000) and retired members Peggy Costello (2002), and Joe Basta (2009).

In her role as Pro Bono Counsel, Naasko leverages Dykema's resources to satisfy the unmet legal needs of the community. She is widely known for serving those who are underserved including child immigrants, human trafficking and domestic violence survivors. Working collaboratively with legal aid, Naasko has launched legal clinics for those seeking personal protection orders. She's also coordinated teams of lawyers to address statewide and national legal crises. She is currently working to pass legislation establishing right to counsel for low-income Detroiters facing eviction.

However, Naasko's work in pro bono goes far beyond her cases. As Dykema's first full-time Pro Bono Counsel, she initiated several innovative projects that promoted best practices and expanded volunteer opportunities for not only Dykema attorneys and summer associates, but corporate counsel nationwide. Her knowledge, thoroughness, availability and mentorship has created a broader network of attorneys providing pro bono service.

Naasko's passionate drive allows her to call attention to unmet needs and find a way to overcome perceived obstacles that historically prevented lawyers outside of and within the firm from volunteering, thereby resulting in a larger group of low-income clients being served. In 2008, under her direction, Dykema became the first firm to take on pro bono work in the representation of abused and neglected migrant children. In 2009, Naasko began directing the Dykema Free Legal Aid Clinic, the first program of its kind in the State of Michigan. The clinic was designed in response to the unmet legal needs that may impede the success of students. About a decade ago, under Naasko's leadership, Dykema was the first major law firm to accept criminal expungements as a pro bono opportunity. Her willingness to engage this project was essential to overcoming initial trepidation within the private bar and resulted in other firms following suit, leading to hundreds of Detroiters having criminal records expunged from their public records. In 2018, Naasko championed the idea of passing a right to counsel in Detroit for low-income Detroiters facing eviction. In 2019, an ordinance proposing such right was introduced by Detroit City Council.

Throughout her career, Naasko has developed strong relationships with business clients to create pro bono partnerships that focus on identifying high-profile, relevant, and succinct pro bono opportunities. As Dykema's Diversity Counsel, she has also implemented diversity initiatives from recruiting and mentoring to business development

opportunities.

Naasko earned a J.D., cum laude, from Boston University and a B.A. from the University of Michigan. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of Pro Bono Counsel, a nonprofit professional organization for attorneys and practice group managers who run a law firm pro bono practice on a full-time basis, and First Step-Wayne County, a non-profit providing comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.