



Miami Valley Community Action Partnership Employment Legal Clinic Awarded Economic Mobility Grant from U.S. Conference of Mayors

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors awarded Mayor Nan Whaley the 2019 DollarWise Innovation Grant on behalf of Miami Valley Community Action Partnership's (MVCAP) Employment Legal Clinic

The \$10,000 grant recognizes cities with innovative programs or policies that foster economic mobility and income stability efforts for their residents. Mayor Whaley and MVCAP President and CEO, Cherish Cronmiller, accepted the award in a ceremony today at the Dayton Municipal Court.

The MVCAP Employment Legal Clinic seeks to remove common barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. The clinic provides one-on-one assistance to reinstate suspended driver's licenses, secure driving privileges, and seal criminal records for Montgomery County residents living on the economic margins.

"In a community like Dayton, losing a driver's license can mean losing a job," said Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley. "The work of the MVCAP Employment Legal Clinic to restore driving privileges and remove other barriers to employment is crucial for breaking cycles of poverty in our community."

In 2017, 1.1 million Ohioans - or nearly 12 percent of eligible drivers - had a suspended license. The loss of a driver's license has a particularly devastating impact on low-income people by imposing crushing financial obligations and can lead to unemployment for those with no means to pay the required fines and no way to get to work. The clinic fills a gap by working with the courts to eliminate or

reduce exorbitant penalties that prevent clients from acquiring their driver's and professional licenses, while often covering the client's remaining fees and court costs.

"Our Legal Clinic sees the impact a suspended license has on a family every day," said Cherish Cronmiller, President and CEO of Miami Valley CAP. "License suspensions are our most common cases. Since May 2017 we've assisted over 480 clients and counting. The legal assistance we provide fills an unmet need in our community. We're beyond grateful for the support this award will provide to families seeking to remove the legal barriers in their path to self-sufficiency."

The awards ceremony took place prior to a large-scale Driver's License Reinstatement Clinic held at Dayton Municipal Court in conjunction with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE), the Ohio BMV, Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project, Legal Aid of Western Ohio, MVCAP, Montgomery County Child Support, and Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation. This clinic was part of a statewide amnesty initiative to help qualified people reinstate their licenses with reduced or waived fees. This program will expire on July 31, 2019 unless it is extended by the state.

"For many people the reinstatement fees are impossible to pay," said Dayton Clerk of Courts Mark Owens. "As a result they may drive without a license and my pick up another court case, which leads to more reinstatement fees. It can be a vicious cycle. Our goal with this event is to remove as many barriers to the reinstatement process as possible. We are bringing more than one dozen organizations and 100 volunteers into the courthouse to take care of all eligibility issues in one place."

"The U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly supports Dayton's efforts to remove barriers to economic mobility," said Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. "Mayor Whaley and MVCAP's support for expanded legal aid to restore driver's licenses is critical to helping people drive to work and find employment. This new initiative makes common sense and helps people help themselves."

For more information about the MVCAP Employment Legal Clinic, visit <https://miamivalleycap.org/legal-clinic/>. For more information about the U.S. Conference of Mayors DollarWise program, visit <https://www.usmayors.org/dollarwise/>.

