

2021 D.C. Bar Pro Bono Initiative Report

Executive Summary

The 2021 Pro Bono Initiative Report examines the 2021 calendar year pro bono performance of reporting firms signing on to the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Initiative. Sixty-nine Signatory Firms have committed to contribute 3% or 5% (or alternatively, 60 or 100 hours per attorney) of their annual total paying client billable hours to pro bono activities and to report their performance to the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center each year.

Highlights of the 2021 Pro Bono Initiative Report:

- Sixty-seven signatory Firms reported just under 900,000 of pro bono service in 2021. The firms reported that the total number of pro bono hours decreased substantially – from 1,049,139 in 2020 to 896,321 in 2021. There was also a decrease in the average percentage of pro bono hours as a percentage of firms’ total billable hours – from 5.3% in 2020 to 4.3% in 2021. In addition, only forty-two firms provided this metric in 2021, while 55 provided this metric in 2020.
- While the total number of attorneys participating in pro bono increased in 2021, from 9,328 to 9,354, the percentage of attorneys engaged in pro bono decreased. The participation rate was 76% in 2021, down from 81% in 2020.
- In 2021, firms devoted 413,258 pro bono hours (or 46% of total pro bono hours) to serving D.C. residents of limited means or organizations that serve them. This is a significant decrease from 2020, when 52% of total pro bono hours was devoted to D.C. residents of limited means. This is a cause for concern.
- 25 firms reported engaging in one or more new pro bono activities in D.C., including:
 - o A partnership with corporate in-house department (10)
 - o A D.C. office-wide signature project (5)
 - o A rotation/fellowship/externship program (10)
 - o Other D.C.-based activity or project (12)
 - o Other (6)