INNOCENCE PROJECT

Job Announcement
August 2020

State Policy Advocate

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Innocence Project was founded in 1992 by Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University to assist the wrongly convicted who could be proven innocent through DNA testing. The Innocence Project's groundbreaking use of DNA technology to free innocent people has provided irrefutable proof that wrongful convictions are not isolated or rare events but instead arise from systemic defects. Now an independent nonprofit organization closely affiliated with Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University, the Innocence Project's mission is to free the staggering numbers of innocent people who remain incarcerated and to bring substantive reform to the system responsible for their unjust imprisonment.

JOB SUMMARY

The State Policy Advocate leads campaigns in various states to change the laws, policies and practices that contribute to the wrongful conviction of innocent people. A central goal of the Innocence Project is to reform the criminal justice system to prevent future injustices, and the advocates work state by state to pass laws that address deficiencies in the system that have been identified through the exoneration of innocent people. Working in legislatures, with various stakeholders (e.g. exonerated and impacted people, defender organizations, community-based organizations, law enforcement, etc.) in coordination with members of a national Network of local innocence organizations, the advocates lobby, build coalitions and successfully enact legislation across the nation.

The position requires a deep understanding of the state legislative process, excellent strategic skills, oral communications skills, including the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders and to translate technical, legal issues into lay terms. The position requires extensive travel.

The Policy Advocate reports to the Director of Policy and works in close collaboration with key members of the policy staff.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

POLICY CHANGE

- Initiate and lead state-level advocacy campaigns, with an emphasis on legislative campaigns.
- Prepare reports, testimony, memos, op-eds and other briefing materials for state-specific campaigns based on analysis and synthesis of research, data and other information.
- Serve as a spokesperson for reform efforts in state campaigns.
- Develop policy messaging, in partnership with the communications staff and PR firms, to accompany communications strategies for state campaigns.
- Identify and cultivate stakeholder partnerships to support state campaigns.
- Facilitate and curate state legislative hearings.
- Provide local partners in multiple states with advice and support from the IP Policy Department on policy initiatives.
- Provide technical assistance to and manage contract lobbyists.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop relationships with local and state advocates, stakeholders and policymaker staff.
- Facilitate and represent the organization at symposia, training, legislative hearings, and state-level task forces.
- Spark interest in the need for innocence reforms.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Build allies at the state level in service of the policy work.
- Support organizational participation in specified coalitions and/or task forces.
- Engage local partners and create in-state coalitions.
- Cultivate champions for reform among influential lawmakers, community-based leaders, defender organizations, law enforcement stakeholders, and other criminal justice stakeholders in state and local government.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Must have a bachelor's degree in a related field.
- Must have three (3) years of experience building successful coalitions & demonstrated success building legislative campaigns, including identifying champions for reform, navigating the state legislative process (e.g. identifying legislative sponsors, working with legislative leadership, navigating the committee process in state houses, including experience with relevant fiscal committees) to build necessary support for successful passage of legislation at the state level.
- Ability to travel 25% - 35% of time. (Due to COVID-19, non-essential travel has been suspended until further notice.)

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- An advanced degree in public policy, law or political science.
- At least three (3) years of experience as a state legislative staffer or lobbyist.
- Experience providing oral and written testimony before legislative bodies.
- Experience synthesizing policy information from multiple sources and communicating a stance in a cogent manner. (A J.D. is not a requirement, but the ability to understand and communicate legal issues is.)
- Experience working with a broad range of criminal justice stakeholders.

KEY COMPETENCIES

- Makes clear and convincing oral presentations, listens effectively, and clarifies information as needed.
- Ability to develop a broad view of an environment, identifies key interdependencies and then devises multiple approaches to achieve desired results.
- Ability to quickly read and navigate an environment then establishes credibility with key individuals for the purpose of persuading them to support a shared cause.
- Ability to interact effectively with individuals from different demographic identities by maintaining respect where values and perspectives may differ in pursuit of common goals.
- A strong commitment to social justice and criminal justice and wrongful conviction reform.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The salary for this position is highly competitive and the Innocence Project offers an excellent benefit

package, including health, dental and vision insurance, Flexible Spending Account, 401k plan with company-match, and paid Transitcheks.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Innocence Project considers the diversity of its workforce to be vital to our organization's success in meeting its mission. We strongly encourage applicants from all cultures, races, educational backgrounds, life experiences, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations, age, gender, and physical abilities to apply.

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, it is our policy not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status, or any other category protected by law.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

To apply, please visit Paycom. Upload your cover letter and resume as (last name. first name. cover letter/resume). Information submitted through this secure site is kept confidential. Due to the large volume of applications, we are unable to give applicant updates by phone.