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ERIE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT, INC.

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Mr. Robert M. Graber, Clerk
Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

March 29, 2011

Dear Mr. Graber:

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I write to express my interest in the current vacancy on the County Community Corrections Advisory Board. I am an attorney and a member of the Bar Association of Erie County.

I am currently employed as the Supervising Immigration Attorney at the Volunteer Lawyers Project. I have spent my 23-year legal career as an immigration attorney, mainly representing those in deportation proceedings, though I also handle asylum and family-based matters.

In my current position, one of my primary responsibilities is to provide legal orientations, or "Know Your Rights" workshops, to non-U.S. citizens detained for deportation by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at the federal detention facility in Batavia. The funding source for this work comes from the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), and our services have been shown to improve immigration court efficiency, cut down on detention time, and prepare detained immigrants to represent themselves more effectively before the court. In this capacity, I have worked cooperatively for several years with both the local immigration courts and the local U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) on this positive effort.

Additionally, I am involved with DRO authorities and DHS counsel's office on implementing an efficient program for stipulating to removal orders for detainees who clearly have no remedy available to remain in the U.S. We have found that this initiative has benefits to all parties involved: cutting down detention costs and facilitating removal for those who want to be deported quickly.

Finally, I also recruit, train and mentor *pro bono* attorneys to represent immigrants before the Immigration Courts in Buffalo and Batavia, and oversee a program to assist immigrant victims of violence and human trafficking.

From 2002 to 2005, I served as Chair of the Immigration Law Committee of the Bar Association of Erie County (BAEC), and am currently on the Human Rights and International Law Committees of the Bar. I was named by Upstate New York's *Super Lawyers* magazine as one of the top

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immigration attorneys in the region for 2009. In 2007 and 2008, I was elected by my peers in Western New York's legal community to the *Buffalo Law Journal's* annual *Who's Who in Law*; and in May 2008, I received the John R. Long Award from VIVE/La Casa, a Buffalo agency that assists those seeking refuge in Canada. I have also published extensively in the area of immigration law.

I currently reside in North Buffalo with my two daughters. I grew up in Williamsville, and am a 1988 graduate of UB Law School. I immigrated to the United States as a child, and was raised speaking French and Spanish.

I believe I have the qualifications and insight to serve effectively on the Advisory Board, and look forward to hearing from you.

I may be contacted at either 716-847-0662 ext. 314 or sfeal@wnylc.com. Please note, however, that I will be out of town from April 16 to April 30th.

Thank you kindly for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophie Feal', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sophie Feal