

Racial Equity Progress & Accountability Report

June 2022 – December 2022

Regional Housing
Legal Services &
The Pennsylvania
Utility Law Project

Transparency & Accountability in Housing and Utility Policy

- RHLS held several free webinars to share its tenant manual for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties with advocates.
- RHLS submitted comments calling for equitable distribution and allocation of resources to both the Housing Options Grant Program and the Whole-Home Repairs Program.
- Through a proceeding related to implementation of remote service termination procedures, PULP negotiated a settlement that is pending Commission approval which includes two required collaboratives to discuss language access policies and procedures.
- PULP submitted comments to a utility company's Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan (USECP), including sections advocating for improved outreach practices for customers with limited English proficiency and requesting clarification that social security numbers are not required for customer assistance program eligibility.
- PULP submitted comments to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) in support of, and with recommendations for, its Diversity Reporting Rulemaking. The rulemaking directs utilities to report annual progress of their diversity programs.

Outreach, Engagement, Listening, and Learning

- RHLS's Senior Counsel Judy Berkman was a course planner for a 90 minute ethics CLE that focused on bias in the Philadelphia Legal System.
- PULP's Energy Justice Coordinator Madi Keaton prepared and presented a session focused on environmental justice at the statewide Homes Within Reach Conference
- The DEI Education Subcommittee hosted a screening of "Summer of Soul" in October.
- Some staff members completed their year-long Freedom School training series, a social justice primer rooted in Black feminist pedagogy.

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Resources & Internal Programs

- RHLS and PULP's Leadership Team have released a draft statement adopting certain definitions for racial justice in housing, utilities, and community development. RHLS will implement racial equity and work towards racial justice by engaging in work that directly repairs past and current racial inequities in housing, utility service, community / economic development, and the legal system. RHLS is committed to integrating racial equity in all aspects of our work, in pursuit of achieving racial justice in housing, utilities, and community/economic development. We believe all people deserve housing that is healthy, safe, and affordable in a community of choice where they can thrive.
- RHLS's Strategic Plan Implementation Update has been completed and staff are working on ways to operationalize the goals.
- The DEI External Work Subcommittee submitted a set of recommendations to Leadership Team. They have chosen three areas of growth for our DEI work: community-centered trainings, expanding client leadership and input opportunities, and amplifying the stories and wisdom of systemically disenfranchised communities.
- The DEI Internal Work Subcommittee has continued to review assigned internal policies and expect to be finished with recommended revisions by March 2023.