

# 2023

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report

**bodman**  
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

# A Message from Carrie Leahy, Chair

Welcome to Bodman PLC's inaugural Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report. I take great pride in sharing the progress we made in 2023 as we continue to strive towards fostering a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

Bodman has been dedicated to expanding our DEI efforts and we continue to listen to and learn from the different perspectives that our colleagues offer. This commitment is not only to our employees, but also to our clients and the communities we serve.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress towards advancing our DEI goals and objectives. In doing so, we are guided by the four pillars of our DEI Strategic Plan:

- **Recruitment:** Build the best workforce by considering a diverse pool of candidates and hiring the most outstanding candidates.
- **Retention:** Build the best workforce by retaining and advancing the best employees from, and creating a welcoming environment for all of, the Firm's diverse workforce.
- **Environment:** Foster a diverse and inclusive Firm culture that invites all individuals to be their full and open selves.
- **Enhance the Firm's profile:** Promote and support Firm and individual initiatives in the legal and business communities and internally at the Firm.



We are proud of the progress we have made in fostering an inclusive work environment, yet we also recognize this work will be ongoing. Our commitment to DEI continues and we plan to evolve and adapt our strategies.

As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to championing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Together, we have the power to shape a brighter, more inclusive future at Bodman.

# A Message from Bodman's DEI Committee Chairs

2023 was a year of continued progress for Bodman. We grew our practice groups with the best and brightest individuals, hosted educational programming at which colleagues learned about different backgrounds and cultures, and provided unique opportunities for colleagues to build stronger connections, both within the Firm and the Michigan legal and business communities.

In this report, we are proud to share the programs and initiatives the Firm and its DEI Committee successfully implemented in 2023, including our bInclusive speaker series, outreach events with local law students, diversity trainings, and Mansfield Certification Plus status.

As the leaders of Bodman's DEI Committee, we are proud of the progress made and look forward to what will be accomplished in 2024. We extend the deepest gratitude to each member of the DEI Committee, to our dedicated colleagues, and to all those who championed our DEI initiatives in 2023. It's through their dedication, passion, and unwavering support that we continue to be able to drive meaningful and sustained change.



**Damali A. Sahu**  
Member and Co-Chair of  
DEI Committee



**Jennifer M. Oertel**  
Member and Co-Chair of  
DEI Committee



**Jay B. Long**  
Member and Vice Chair  
of DEI Committee



# Meet the DEI Committee

Bodman strives to foster a collegial and inclusive culture in which each person is encouraged to and assisted in reaching their full potential.

Our DEI Committee is comprised of members, associates, staff attorneys, and administrative professionals, all of whom share the same goal of creating a welcoming environment for all.



**Damali A. Sahu**  
Member and DEI Committee  
Co-Chair



**Jennifer M. Oertel**  
Member and DEI Committee  
Co-Chair



**Jay B. Long**  
Member and DEI Committee  
Vice Chair



**Kate Brink Harrison**  
Manager of Diversity and  
Talent



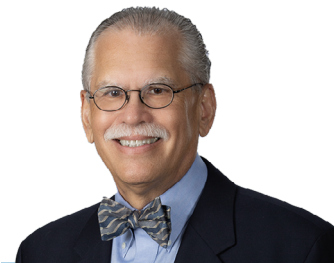
**Hebba Aref**  
Member



**Jacqueline W. August**  
Staff Attorney



**John T. Below**  
Member



**Harvey W. Berman**  
Member



**Catherine L. Borza**  
Director of Operations and  
Human Resources





**Michael G. Costello**  
Member



**Sarah L. Cylkowski**  
Member



**Jessica L. Davis**  
Member



**Debani T. Gordon Lehman**  
Senior Associate



**Julia C. Massaro**  
Member



**Tierra N. McGrew**  
Human Resources  
Manager



**Nicholas P. McElhinny**  
Member



**Albert H. Pak**  
Senior Associate



**Karolina M. Powalka**  
Senior Associate



**LaVerne Stewart**  
Administrative Assistant



**Tabitha M. Taylor-Vasser**  
Administrative Assistant



**April L. Thomas**  
Administrative Assistant



**Camellia Williams**  
Administrative Assistant



**Sarah J. Williams**  
Member



**Michael S. Witten**  
Assistant Director of  
Operations

# Mansfield 6.0 Certification Plus

Bodman is pleased to announce that the Firm was awarded Mansfield Rule 6.0 Certification Plus status in 2023. Bodman's Mansfield Team coordinates the Firm's efforts throughout the program, including tracking diversity within client pitch meetings, lateral hires, promotions, and Firm leadership roles.

In 2022, Bodman joined Diversity Lab's Mansfield Rule 6.0 Certification program. In our first year of participation, Bodman was awarded Certification Plus status, the highest level of designation in the Mansfield program.

The Mansfield methodology uses a data-driven research method that embeds accountability, transparency, and knowledge sharing into law firm talent attraction, retention, and promotion practices.



**Mansfield Rule**  
Certified *Plus* 2022-2023  
Powered by  
DIVERSITYLAB

Named after Arabella Mansfield, the first woman attorney in the U.S., the program has become the standard by which law firms track and certify that they have considered at least 30 percent women, lawyers from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, lawyers with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ lawyers for top leadership roles, senior-level lateral hiring, promotions into the equity partnership, and participation in client pitch meetings.

Mansfield Certification Plus status indicates that, in addition to meeting or exceeding the baseline certification requirements, the firms have at least 30 percent underrepresented lawyers in a notable number of their current leadership roles.

Bodman is proud of this award and is currently participating in the 2023-2024 rendition of the Mansfield program.

## *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* Inaugural "Empowering Women" Award

In 2023, Bodman was chosen for *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* inaugural "Empowering Women" award, which recognizes law firms and legal departments that have shown a strong commitment to considering women for hiring and promotion, providing mentoring and professional advancement opportunities to women and other attorneys, and establishing programs and policies to help women and other attorneys thrive professionally. Bodman is one of 16 Michigan law firms selected for this recognition.

**bodman**  
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

# Individual Attorney Recognitions

Damali Sahu Named Notable Leader in DEI by  
*Crain's Detroit Business*



Alexis Smith-Scott Selected for Detroit Regional Chamber's  
Leadership Detroit Class 44

Albert Pak Named 2023 American Bar Association  
Outstanding Young Nonprofit Lawyer

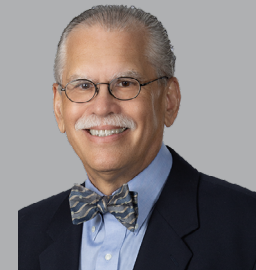


Michelle Thurber Czapski and Jennifer Oertel Listed as  
*Michigan Super Lawyers* "Top 50 Women"



# Individual Attorney Recognitions

Harvey Berman Recognized as “Go To Lawyer” for Construction Law by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*



Jacqueline August Named 2023 Up & Coming Lawyer by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*

Jennifer Hetu Listed in *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*'s 2023 Class of Influential Women in Law



Michelle Thurber Czapski Included in “Go To Lawyers Power List” for Business Litigation by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*

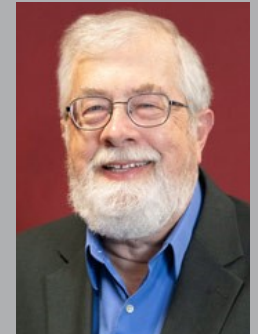
# bInclusive Speaker Series

Bodman regularly hosts Firm-wide presentations on a variety of diversity-related topics as part of our “bInclusive” speaker series. Below are the speakers and topics we featured in 2023.

## February - Black History Month

In recognition of Black History Month, we kicked off our 2023 bInclusive speaker series in February by hosting Dr. Roy E. Finkenbine, a Professor of History and Director of the Black Abolitionist Archive at the University of Detroit Mercy.

Dr. Finkenbine presented on the forceful liberation of Robert Cromwell (which took place in downtown Detroit in 1847), federal fugitive slave laws, and their modern legacy. We also supplied treats from local Black-owned food businesses at each office, including Detroit Mini Donut (Detroit and Troy), The Cookie and Crumb (Ann Arbor), and Daddy’s Dough Cookies (Grand Rapids).



## March - Women’s History Month



In March, the DEI Committee and Women’s Forum jointly welcomed Renee Knake Jefferson for Women’s History Month. Professor Jefferson teaches at the University of Houston Law Center. She also is a Trustee of Michigan State University and former Professor at MSU College of Law.

Drawing from her book *Shortlisted: Women in the Shadows of the Supreme Court*, Professor Jefferson presented on the nine women who, dating back to the 1930s, were shortlisted for the U.S. Supreme Court before Sandra Day O’Connor became the first female Justice in 1981. She also discussed the harms of shortlisting; specifically, how adding qualified female candidates to a list but passing over them ultimately creates the appearance of diversity while preserving the status quo.

# bInclusive Speaker Series

## April - Arab American Heritage Month

For Arab American Heritage Month, we invited Khaled A. Beydoun for a discussion on the history of Arab American and Muslim heritage and culture and addressed some common myths and misrepresentations concerning Arab Americans and Muslims.

Beydoun is a native Detroit, law professor, author, and leading voice on Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim identity. He is also recognized as one of the leading experts on Islamophobia.



## May - Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

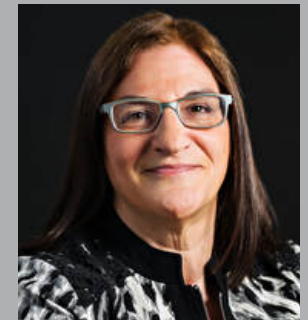
In May, we recognized Asian Pacific American Heritage Month with a presentation by Ayesha Ghazi Edwin on “Asian Pacific Americans: Past and Present.” Her remarks touched upon the history and achievements of Asian Pacific Americans and the unique challenges this large and diverse community has faced throughout the years.

Edwin is a political social worker and community organizer. She was appointed by Governor Whitmer as the Chair of the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and in 2022 was elected to the Ann Arbor City Council.



## June - LGBTQ Pride Month

For Pride Month we hosted Christine Yared, a Grand Rapids-based attorney, educator, and LGBTQ+ advocate. Christine shared with us a detailed overview of LGBTQ+ rights in Michigan and the current challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces as it works toward achieving civil rights equality.





## bInclusive Speaker Series

### September - National Hispanic Heritage Month

In September, we welcomed Abril Valdes Siewert to speak to us for National Hispanic Heritage Month. Ms. Siewert is a metro Detroit-based attorney and member of the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan. In her presentation, Ms. Siewert explained the historical and practical differences between the terms Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, and Latine. She also discussed several important court cases that were instrumental in their impact on the Latino community and American jurisprudence.



### October - National Disability Employment Awareness Month

To recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we hosted Rachel Prevatt of Disability Rights Michigan. Among other topics, Ms. Prevatt spoke on the history of disability rights and advocacy in the U.S. and offered practical tips on how to foster an inclusive workplace for individuals with visible and invisible disabilities.



### November - Native American Heritage Month

For Native American Heritage Month, Matthew L.M. Fletcher spoke to us about Federal Indian law and U.S. Supreme Court practice, and delved into how these two specialty areas of legal practice interact.

Fletcher is a University of Michigan Law School professor and nationally renowned scholar in the areas of Federal Indian law and American Indian tribal law. His scholarship and advocacy is often cited by the U.S. Supreme Court. Fletcher also sits as Chief Justice of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.



# Firm Sponsorships



The Firm was again pleased to sponsor the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion's Annual Tribute Dinner in April.

The Tribute Dinner recognizes community and corporate leaders, board members, and community organizations who are engaged in work that aligns with the Roundtable's mission to transform communities and the workplace to overcome racism, discrimination, systemic inequities, and institutional and inherent bias.



Bodman's **Damali Sahu** and **Alexis Smith-Scott** represented Bodman at the Alden J. "Butch" Carpenter Memorial Scholarship Gala on March 25, 2023.

The Butch Carpenter Memorial Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to three outstanding first-year Black Law Students Association members at Michigan Law who demonstrate a commitment to combining business and law to promote community development.

Bodman is a proud annual contributor to the Juan Luis Tienda Scholarship Fund at the University of Michigan Law School.

The Scholarship honors outstanding first-year members of the Latinx Law Students Association who have demonstrated commitment to working in underserved Latinx communities.



Bodman proudly sponsored the Annual Wolverine Bar Association Barristers' Ball, which was held April 29, 2023 at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center.

The money raised during the Barristers' Ball funds programs and services, including student externships, internships, scholarships, education courses, mentoring, and legal resources for underrepresented individuals.

# Firm Sponsorships



*Fatmeh Cheaib pictured with Detroit Mercy Law BLSA members*

Bodman was happy to support the Detroit Mercy Law Black Law Students Association (BLSA) at its annual Vegas Night fundraising event on March 25, 2023.

The proceeds raised at Vegas Night help fund four scholarships that are awarded annually to minority students at Detroit Mercy Law. The scholarship offsets costs associated with law school and admission to the bar.

Bodman was represented at the event by associate and Detroit Mercy Law alum **Fatmeh Cheaib**.



*L/R: Jacqueline August, Kyle Traver, Albert Pak, and Charley Meng*

Bodman was pleased to sponsor the Michigan Asian Pacific American Bar Association's (MAPABA) annual Lunar New Year dinner on February 11, 2023 at Hong Hua Fine Chinese Dining. 2023 was the Year of the Rabbit, which signifies longevity, peace, and prosperity.

Bodman attorneys in attendance were **Jacqueline August** (MAPABA President), **Kyle Traver**, and **Albert Pak** (MAPABA Treasurer). Also in attendance was Charley Meng (Bodman's principal in-house attorney contact at Inteva Products), State Bar of Michigan President James Heath, and State Senator Stephanie Chang.

Bodman proudly sponsored the Michigan Law OUTLaws' 2023 Kevin E. Kennedy Fellowship Gala ("Gayla"). Named in honor of alumnus Kevin Kennedy, a late LGBTQ+ activist and lawyer, the Gayla brings members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies together under one roof. Our sponsorship helped fund the OUTLaws Public Service Fellowship, which supports LGBTQ+ law students to pursue careers in the public interest or nonprofit sector, where they can contribute to and advocate for the interests of the LGBTQ+ community.



# Richard D. Rohr Scholarship

The Richard D. Rohr Scholarship was established by Bodman and several of its attorneys in 2008 in memory of Richard Rohr, who served as Chair of Bodman for 25 years and spent his entire career with the Firm. Mr. Rohr was also a proud Michigan Law alumnus and served as an adjunct faculty member of the Law School.

Each year, the Scholarship is awarded to an outstanding second- or third-year law student who plans to practice in Michigan and demonstrates financial need, with preference given to graduates of Detroit high schools or graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities or Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Jennifer Swanson, a 3L student at Michigan Law, was the 2023 recipient of the Richard D. Rohr Scholarship. During law school, Jennifer served as a student attorney with Michigan Law's Child Welfare Appellate Clinic and Workers' Rights Clinic, a Peggy Browning Fellow with the UAW, and a Bergstrom Child Welfare Fellow with Michigan Law's Child Advocacy Law Clinic. After law school, Jennifer plans to practice labor law in Detroit.

We are proud to continue to support talented law students like Jennifer through this scholarship fund.



“This scholarship has helped me follow my passion for public interest law without worrying how it will impact my financial future. I have also been able to engage in independent studies and clinics without worrying about working during law school.”

- Jennifer Swanson, 2023 Recipient



*Richard D. Rohr, Bodman's Chair from 1975 to 2000*

# 2023 Summer Associate Program

We were pleased to welcome a talented class of nine summer associates in May. Over the course of their ten-week program, the summer associates received a variety of assignments across all practice groups, allowing them to gain as much experience as possible. We were also pleased to have a summer associate based in our Grand Rapids office for the first time.

Here is what our summer associates had to say about their time at Bodman:

“As a summer associate at Bodman, I genuinely felt welcomed and valued, particularly so as the first Grand Rapids-based summer associate. From the very first week, I was given substantive work assignments that allowed me to explore various practice areas outside of my primary interest in intellectual property. In addition to the work, I was able to bond with my fellow classmates and the rest of Bodman’s attorneys on a more personal level during the lunch outings and other social events, my favorite being when everyone visited the Grand Rapids office for a delicious lunch and fun painting class afterwards.”

- **Estella Riahi**, Michigan State University College of Law



*Back row L/R: Tara Zrepskey, Jennifer Ruiz, Grace Heidorn, Estella Riahi, Carson Garguilo*  
*Front row L/R: Yasmine Choucair, Mackenzie Bailey, Reem Aburukba, Tatianna Gore*

“My time at Bodman reshaped my perception of Big Law. Despite initial nerves about the environment and my performance, the supportive community of fellow summers, who are now my friends, along with attorneys, and administrative professionals, made me feel valued and welcomed. My experience at Bodman, especially as a 1L, not only altered my view of Big Law but also boosted my confidence in my ability to thrive within it.”

- **Mackenzie Bailey**, Michigan State University College of Law

“I learned so much as a summer associate at Bodman. I grew exponentially as a future lawyer, which I attribute to the work itself, and arguably more importantly, to all of the wonderful attorneys! Everyone was dedicated to helping me learn and made it easy by always leaving their doors open for me to ask questions. I look forward to returning as an associate attorney to continue working with such an amazing group!”

- **Tara Zrepskey**, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

# Leaders in the Community

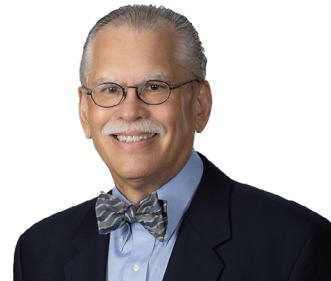
Bodman attorneys are not only active in the Firm's DEI initiatives, but have also taken on leadership roles supporting underprivileged or underrepresented communities through bar associations, board memberships, and volunteer opportunities. Here is a sample of notable leadership positions our attorneys serve:



**Jacqueline August**  
President, Michigan Asian  
Pacific American Bar



**Marc Bakst**  
Chair of the Board of  
Directors, Jewish Family



**Harvey Berman**  
Secretary and Counsel,  
Fisher House Michigan



**Carrie Leahy**  
Member of the Board of  
Directors, Inforum Michigan



**Debani Gordon Lehman**  
Member, State Bar of Michigan  
Diversity and Inclusion



**Jay Long**  
Member of the Board of  
Directors, Ruth Ellis Center



**Jennifer Oertel**  
Member of the Advisory  
Board, Invest for Better



**Damali Sahu**  
Member of the Board of Directors,  
Michigan Roundtable for Diversity  
and Inclusion



**Albert Pak**  
Treasurer, Michigan Asian  
Pacific American Bar  
Association



**Monica Stover**  
Co-Founder, Grand Rapids IP  
Women's Forum



# Women's Forum

Bodman's Women's Forum hosts in-person social and educational events in which our women attorneys discuss topics related to their professional advancement and personal wellbeing in an informal and supportive environment. Below are the events the Women's Forum hosted in 2023.

The Forum kicked off 2023 with a well-attended Spring Social in March. Coinciding with Women's History Month, the informal networking reception was held in the Detroit office and was a great opportunity to reconnect with colleagues in a laid-back environment.

In July, the Forum hosted a Summer Social at the home of Member Jill Miller. Attendees, including several summer associates, had the opportunity to socialize and network in a casual setting.

In May, the Forum hosted a panel discussion entitled "Secrets to Success" featuring Firm Chair Carrie Leahy and Members Damali Sahu and Michelle Czapski. The panelists shared insights on a number of topics that are particularly relevant to women attorneys, including leadership skills development, effective time management, overcoming adversity, and work-life integration.

In October, the Forum welcomed attorney and wellbeing coach Karissa Wallace for a presentation and discussion on "Wellbeing 101 for Professionals." Karissa spoke about the importance of stress management and shared a number of actionable techniques for effective stress recovery, including adequate sleep, mindfulness exercises, and physical activity. Attendees also brainstormed healthier habits to adopt and support their own wellbeing.



*L/R: Katherine Razdolsky Rothstein, Karissa Wallace and Kate Harrison at the "Wellbeing 101 for Professionals" panel*



"The Women's Forum has allowed me to meet and build relationships with women throughout the Firm, which has created cross-selling opportunities that I wouldn't have otherwise had."

- **Chelsey Jones**  
Member, Detroit

# Law Student Outreach Events

One goal of the Firm's DEI Strategic Plan is to foster and strengthen institutional relationships with local law schools and their diverse student affinity groups. In furtherance of this objective, the DEI Committee hosted several law student-focused events in 2023.

In April, we held two interactive panel discussions with law students on "What They Don't Teach You in Law School."

For the first event, we welcomed a diverse group of Wayne Law students in the Detroit office. Panelists included Bodman attorneys Albert Pak, Karolina Powalka, Alexis Smith-Scott, Matthew Fleming, and Fawzeih Daher.

The second panel was held via Zoom with a group of Detroit Mercy Law students. Albert Pak and Karolina Powalka again served as panelists, and were joined by Detroit Mercy Law alum Rebecca El Badaoui and Fatmeh Cheaib.

At both events the law students had an opportunity to ask the attorneys questions about their career journeys, law firm expectations of associates, how to stand out during on-campus interviews, and work-life integration. The attorneys also shared candid insights on what the practice of law is really like and how students can best prepare themselves for a successful legal career.



*Panelists at the Wayne Law event*

"This event truly lived up to its name, offering invaluable insights into this profession. The panel provided a refreshingly realistic perspective on the intricacies of this career path. What stood out to me the most was the diversity of perspectives shared by the panelists. Despite their differing viewpoints, a common thread of wisdom ran through their advice, creating a cohesive narrative that resonated with me and my peers. I also appreciated that the panelists had constructive recommendations for steering our career paths in the right direction. They generously shared their success stories, setbacks, and valuable lessons they learned along the way."

- Aleksandra Luca, 3L at Wayne State University Law School



# Law Student Outreach Events

On November 8, 2023 Bodman hosted a group of nearly 30 law students in the Detroit office for National First Generation Day.

The event featured a Q&A with four first-generation Bodman attorneys. The attorneys discussed their professional backgrounds, answered student questions, and shared advice on how to navigate law school and overcome some of the unique career challenges first-generation attorneys often face.

“At Detroit Mercy Law, 85% of our students are first generation. The event at Bodman allowed our students to see themselves in their future careers. The event was welcoming and inviting. Hearing from first-generation attorneys validated the experiences of our first-generation students but also gave them the encouragement and motivation to continue to strive forward.”



**Courtney A. Griffin, PhD**  
Assistant Dean, Diversity, Equity,  
Inclusion, and Belonging at the University  
of Detroit Mercy School of Law



*Bodman first-generation attorney panelists (from left) –  
Debani Gordon Lehman, Harvey Berman, Karolina Powalka, and Fatmeh Cheaib*



# Pro Bono

Pro bono is ingrained in Bodman's culture, beginning with our summer associates and carrying through to our most senior attorneys.

The Firm encourages and supports pro bono work through its long-standing Pro Bono Committee and Pro Bono Counsel, who together manage the Firm's pro bono efforts. Our innovative and effective Pro Bono program makes Bodman a leader and model for other firms in the state. Our paramount goal is to make a direct impact in our communities and on the lives of those with limited or no access to legal services.

## State Bar of Michigan Pro Bono Honor Roll

Bodman and 31 of its attorneys were included in the State Bar of Michigan 2023 A Lawyer Helps Pro Bono Honor Roll. This list recognizes individual attorneys, law firms, and corporations that support access to justice efforts by providing pro bono legal services to low-income individuals and families throughout Michigan. Bodman was one of only two law firms recognized at the highest "Tier 1" level for cumulative firm hours devoted to pro bono matters for the year. We want to recognize four attorneys in particular, each of whom devoted over 100 hours to pro bono service in 2023.



**Barbara Bowman**  
Of Counsel



**Alan Gocha**  
Member



**Sandra Jasinski**  
Member



**Albert Pak**  
Senior Associate



# Pro Bono

Bodman attorneys have dedicated over 2,400 hours to supporting others through pro bono work.

Below are organizations we partnered and collaborated with on pro bono matters in 2023:

- Legal Services of South Central Michigan
- Lakeshore Legal Aid
- Legal Aid of Western Michigan
- Legal Services of Eastern Michigan
- Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit
- ProsperUs
- Michigan Community Resources
- Fair Michigan
- The Joseph Project
- Michigan Women Forward
- American Friends Service Committee

Below are organizations we made monetary contributions to and volunteered at in 2023:

- The Salvation Army
- Gleaners Community Food Bank
- Jive Turkeys Detroit
- Catholic Charities of Southeastern Michigan
- Life Remodeled
- Habitat for Humanity - Detroit
- Matrix Human Services
- Disability Rights Michigan

**2,400+** HOURS OF PRO BONO SERVICE IN 2023









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ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

<https://www.bodmanlaw.com/>

