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Bazelon Center Launches the Donald K. Joseph Social Justice Internship Program

August 27, 2026 – Washington, D.C. - The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law announced today the launch of the *Donald K. Joseph Social Justice Internship Program.* In the spirit of Mr. Joseph's career and to honor his legacy, the program aims to develop future generations of lawyers who are committed to social justice, civil rights and disability rights. With a generous founding gift of $100,000 from The Lipstein Family Foundation, the Bazelon Center will host at least one Donald K. Joseph Social Justice intern every summer in perpetuity.

"The Lipstein Family Foundation's gift is remarkable. The Board of Trustees, the staff and the Bazelon family are grateful to the Joseph and Lipstein families for trusting the Center to carry Donald's legacy forward through a meaningful program for future lawyers who are focused on improving lives, communities and our nation," said Holly O'Donnell, CEO and President of the Bazelon Center. "We are looking forward to formally announcing this program at the Bazelon Center Awards on September 16th at the National Press Club with the Joseph and Lipstein families in attendance."

The Bazelon Center will host its first Donald K. Joseph Social Justice legal intern in the summer of 2027. This opportunity will be open for applicants from Rutgers Law School, Penn State Dickinson Law, Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law, and Temple University Beasley School of Law, where Donald Joseph was a professor, and at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, his alma mater.

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Donald K. Joseph interns will gain hands-on experience investigating and litigating disability rights matters. They will study potential claims by interviewing complainants and witnesses, reviewing documents, and preparing factual and legal memoranda. Interns will also contribute to the Bazelon Center's active litigation docket by conducting legal research, drafting briefs, and assisting with legal proceedings.

These interns will also contribute to the Bazelon Center's policy efforts by conducting background research for fact sheets and policy papers and preparing legal and policy analyses related to regulatory actions, legislation, and current events. They may also attend congressional briefings and hearings, as well as meetings of national disability rights and civil rights coalitions.

The Bazelon Center has many years of experience recruiting, hiring and hosting legal interns and this new program will be built alongside these annual efforts. Donald K. Joseph interns will receive extensive training in disability rights advocacy, along with regular supervision and feedback.

Joseph Family: "The Bazelon Center held a special place in Donald's heart – not only because of his 60 year relationship with the Bazelon family, but also due to his own well-discussed struggles with mental health disabilities. As a Professor of Professional Responsibility, Donald relished in the role of shaping the future legal minds of America and we couldn't think of a better organization to help continue Donald's calling than the Bazelon Center, which we feel shares the same values.

"The Joseph family is grateful to the Lipstein Family Foundation and the Bazelon Center for commemorating Donald with this prestigious internship program. We also thank those who have chosen to remember Donald with a monetary donation to the Bazelon Center. If you are interested in ensuring this unique internship's longevity, we encourage you to do so with a gift at www.bazelon.org/donate, designation Bazelon Legal Fellowships & Internships, dedication to Donald K. Joseph."

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Lipstein Family: “We have many fond memories of our 60 year friendship with Donald and Harriett starting when Donald was Sandy’s dorm counselor his freshman year. Over the years we’ve been there for each other as our children were born and experienced their life events. We spent many evenings at Penn basketball games trying to solve the world’s problems while also trying to understand why Penn players had so much difficulty making free throws.”

About Donald K. Joseph:

Donald K. Joseph earned his Bachelors of Science in physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1963 and his Bachelor of Law at the University of Pennsylvania in 1968. He became a law clerk to Chief Judge Roszel Thomsen Jr. of the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. He then practiced law in the litigation department of the Philadelphia law firm Wolf Block for the next 25 years. In 1996, Donald began his teaching career at Dickinson School of Law (now Penn State Dickinson Law). In 2000, he joined Rutgers University as a visiting associate professor. As a panel moderator at ABA's 32nd Annual National Conference on Professional Responsibility, he wrote "Stop the Shredding: Document Retention after U.S. v. Anderson," 2006 Symposium Issue, *Professional Lawyer* (ABA). In 2009, he was the chair of the Third Symposium on Equality: "Inequality and Work: Facing Barriers, Creating Solutions" sponsored by the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (PILCOP). Joseph served on the Board of PILCOP for more than two decades, three years as a chair of the board and another four as vice chair.

Donald was a close friend of the Bazelon family. His daughter, Rachel Molly Joseph, served on the Bazelon Center’s Board of Trustees from 2017 to 2025 and has been a longtime supporter of the organization. Donald devoted his life to making a difference through his passion for the law.

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About the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law:

Since 1972, the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law has advocated for the civil rights, full inclusion and equality of adults and children with mental health disabilities. The Bazelon Center accomplishes its goals through a unique combination of litigation, public policy advocacy, coalition building and leadership, public education, media outreach and technical assistance — a comprehensive approach that ensures we achieve the greatest impact.