



## MEET OUR NEW STAFF

2024

### Maya Manus



**Role:**

Maya (she/they) is our Staff Attorney who aspires to use her legal education to support folks experiencing poverty, homelessness, and who are Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous to access the legal system, while acknowledging the historic and present harms the legal system inflicts on those communities.

**Hobbies:**

In her free time, Maya enjoys reading a good book, being out in nature or hiking, staying active, and beating her friends at *Super Smash Bros*.

### Hannah Fitzmorris

**Role:**

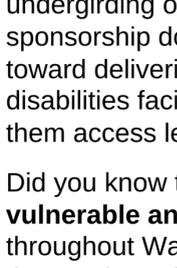
Hannah (she/her) is our Staff Attorney who is passionate about expanding access to justice and working to remove barriers to legal assistance for Washington's most vulnerable residents.

**Hobbies:**

Outside of work, Hannah enjoys live music, reading, and playing with her dog, Gertie.



### Travis Luna



**Role:**

Travis (he/him) is our Paralegal who enjoys supporting clients on their journey towards economic stability and is passionate about providing the human dignity that BLC promotes.

**Hobbies:**

In his free time, Travis enjoys dancing, cooking, entertaining his 4 cats, and making art with his fiancée.

## SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT

1st Security Bank

For the sixth consecutive year, BLC is grateful for **1st Security Bank (FSB) being a supportive sponsor** of our upcoming *LOL: Comedy for A Cause* Fundraiser. FSB's investment is allowing us to host 100 donors and stakeholders to raise \$60,000 in September 2024. By undergirding our annual fundraiser through FSB's sponsorship dollars, we can direct every penny raised toward delivering our 1:1 legal advocacy to clients with disabilities facing poverty and oppression, and helping them access legal services.

Did you know that **FSB invests extensively in vulnerable and underserved communities** throughout Washington and Oregon to help strengthen them? Through their Core Value of "celebrating diversity and supporting equality for all", they support programs and resources to meet the needs of our diverse communities including food drives, school supply donations, banking assistance for the elderly, and the creation of a website accessible for hearing and sight impaired clients and branch personnel able to individually assist with banking needs. FSB also gives back by paying for 16 hours of volunteer time for all employees, and they grant \$5,000 in annual tuition reimbursements to bank personnel, among other generous initiatives. In 2022, FSB was named Best Community Bank and Best Leadership Team in Bank Director's 2022 Ranking Banking Study. We are **proud and thankful to be a recipient of FSB's continual support**.

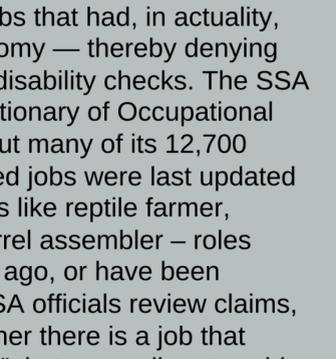
1ST SECURITY BANK

Want to learn more about FSB's giving culture? [Click Here.](#)

## SSA UPDATES

Improvements to List of Obsolete Jobs

I could tell you stories about the psychological impact it has on disability claimants when they learn they lost their claim that they waited years on because somebody said they could do a job that doesn't exist.



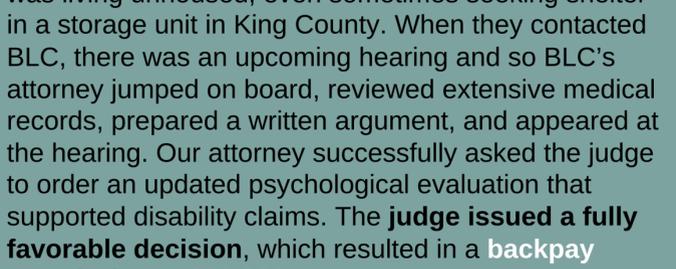
— Kevin Liebkemann,  
New Jersey Disability Attorney

For 33 years, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has denied thousands of people disability benefits by demanding they could find jobs that had, in actuality, vanished from the U.S. economy — thereby denying claimants their vital monthly disability checks. The SSA relied on a list called the "Dictionary of Occupational Titles" for this assessment, but many of its 12,700 entries on skilled and unskilled jobs were last updated in 1977. The list included jobs like reptile farmer, banking pin adjuster, and barrel assembler – roles mostly moved overseas long ago, or have been replaced by machines. As SSA officials review claims, they have to determine whether there is a job that exists "in significant numbers" that an applicant could still do. If a claimant doesn't apply for and perform any number of jobs – including these obsolete ones – they could likely be denied for benefits. But why was SSA insisting a claimant could perform a job that didn't exist in our labor market?

On July 1st, SSA eliminated all but a handful of those unskilled jobs from that long-outdated database, ending a practice that advocates have long denounced as unfair and inaccurate. The change will be an immediate improvement to the already difficult process of obtaining SS benefits.

To read more about this SSA improvement, [click here.](#)

### STATISTICS FOR SECOND QUARTER 2024:



## PARKER'S STORY | BLC CLIENT



Parker (they/them) is a BLC client in her 30s. When we met her, she was struggling with mental health conditions and a neurodevelopmental disorder. Parker was living unhoused, even sometimes seeking shelter in a storage unit in King County. When they contacted BLC, there was an upcoming hearing and so BLC's attorney jumped on board, reviewed extensive medical records, prepared a written argument, and appeared at the hearing. Our attorney successfully asked the judge to order an updated psychological evaluation that supported disability claims. The **judge issued a fully favorable decision**, which resulted in a **backpay award of over \$22,000**.

Our attorney also referred Parker to Solid Ground and to DSHS to help them find supportive housing. Additionally, BLC's attorney helped correct an In-Kind Support and Maintenance (ISM) reduction in their ongoing benefits so they could get the full benefit amount going forward. Now, **Parker is no longer homeless, living in subsidized housing**, and receiving regular SSI monthly payments.

## FUNDER SPOTLIGHT

The Starbucks Foundation



BLC is honored to be a recipient of a \$1,000 Neighborhood Grant from The Starbucks Foundation. With this **funding to uplift families and address homelessness**, we plan to advance our mission and services to help people with disabilities across the Puget Sound to overcome economic insecurity through our crucial and equitable legal advocacy. Their Neighborhood Grants are investments that help build sustained local impact and inspire increased partner (employee) volunteerism with charitable organizations that work in Starbucks communities. Since 2019, The Starbucks Foundation has awarded more than 13,000 grants to organizations across the U.S. and Canada, in excess of \$20 million. Many thanks to The Starbucks Foundation!

To learn more about The Starbucks Foundation's grant recipients, please [click here.](#)

## FREE LIVE WEBINAR

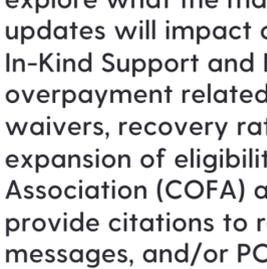
# SOCIAL SECURITY 2024

## REGULATIONS AND POLICY UPDATES

1.25 LAW & LEGAL CLE CREDIT

TUES, SEPT 10TH, 2024

12:00 - 1.15PM



KATE MEANS  
Staff Attorney

HILLARY LOVELL  
Directing Attorney

# REGISTER NOW!

Have you ever wondered what BLC does or why our benefits legal services in the community are so critical? If so, [join our upcoming Zoom webinar](#). Social Security has issued **many new regulations and policy changes** so far in 2024. This webinar will explore what the major changes are and how these updates will impact our clients. The changes include In-Kind Support and Maintenance ("ISM") rules, overpayment related rules such as administrative waivers, recovery rate, and payment plans, and expansion of eligibility to Compacts of Free Association (COFA) applicants. Our webinar will provide citations to regulations, emergency messages, and/or POMS where applicable, and also offer practice tips for helping clients affected by these changes.

Attorneys will receive 1.25 Law & Legal CLE Credit

[Click here to REGISTER NOW!](#)

## Attend LOL on Sept 14th!

Have you purchased tickets for our **Annual LOL Fundraiser** yet? If not, join us to recognize our progress and celebrate our staff, board, and clients on **September 14th** at the **Mt. Baker Community Club**.

This year, our comedic fundraiser will feature local stand-up comedian and podcaster, **Dewa Dorje**; and a Pacific Northwest comedian who resides in New York City, **Yogi Paliwal**. Our event will include a speech from Executive Director, Huy Nguyen, and feature our Equity Award Recipient, nonprofit Solid Ground. Our evening will include drinks, dinner, dessert, a 50/50 Raffle, a Wine Grab, a Live Auction, and a chance to raise your paddle and support BLC at our most important fundraising event of the year!

[Click here to purchase tickets.](#)