The New York Bar Foundation recently presented a grant of $5,320 to the Public Benefits Unit at Bronx Legal Services to support their new initiative called Helping At-Risk Communities (HARC).

The grant will be used to support their new initiative called Helping At-Risk Communities (HARC), which provides targeted interventions and assistance to four vulnerable populations facing eviction: people with disabilities/serious illnesses; noncitizens; survivors of domestic violence; and, people age 60 or over. HARC creates longer-term stability for the most vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness by going beyond the emergency rent grant or subsidy that stops the eviction and providing targeted, ongoing legal advocacy once their housing case is resolved. HARC keeps people out of Housing Court longer, reduces the likelihood that DV survivors will return to unsafe situations, and improves health outcomes, among other benefits.

Jane Aoyama, the Project Director of Bronx Legal Services, hailed the generous grant from the New York Bar Foundation to support the HARC initiative. Ms. Aoyama explains, "Partnering with the New York Bar Foundation on this new initiative is of vital importance to the communities we are serving. With this grant, we are able to help families and individuals not only access critical benefits but keep them. Interrupting housing instability gives people a chance to create opportunities for themselves and their families."

Steven Bateman is the HARC Paralegal. HARC utilizes a paralegal-driven model of service, under the guidance of attorneys, to provide expert benefits assistance and representation at administrative hearings for vulnerable New Yorkers facing eviction. Foundation grants assist non-profit organizations with essentials-of-life issues such as child support, consumer debt, housing, access to health care and education, and family matters such as domestic violence and family stability.

"The New York Bar Foundation has allocated nearly $700,000 in grants to more than 85 programs across New York significantly increasing the total dollar amount of grants over the past several years," said Lucia Whisenand, chair of the Grant Review Committee. "The issues we touch on are extensive and impact people in life changing ways."

By raising awareness of the need for access to civil legal services and allocating resources to help meet these needs, the Foundation will help make access to justice a reality for New Yorkers and, thereby, enhance the understanding of and respect for the rule of law. "Through our grant-making program we help improve access to justice by providing seed grants to innovative legal projects piloting new ways to help those in need," adds June Castellano, Vice-chair of the Grant Review Committee. "When you give to the Foundation you help make a difference across New York State."

The New York Bar Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, is the charitable arm of the New York State Bar Association. Established in 1950, the Foundation is dedicated to aiding charitable and educational projects to meet the law-related needs of the public and the legal profession. To learn more about the Foundation and how you can support its programs, go to www.tnybf.org or email Deborah Auspelmyer dauspelmyer@tnybf.org