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ACLU of Virginia Hires Mary Bauer As New Executive Director
Experienced social justice advocate takes reins in June

Richmond, VA – The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia announced today that it has hired Mary Bauer to succeed Executive Director Claire Guthrie Gastañaga, who announced her retirement in October 2020 after nine years with the organization.

“We are thrilled to have Mary join the ACLU of Virginia team,” said Stephen M. Levinson, president of the ACLU of Virginia Board of Directors. “Mary is an experienced executive director, and has served in multiple roles during her career, including legal director, advocacy director and professor. She has deep roots in the Commonwealth that will serve us well.”

Bauer most recently served as the legal director for Muslim Advocates. She previously served as legal director for the Southern Poverty Law Center and the ACLU of Virginia, and as general counsel for Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. Bauer has had a long and varied relationship with the Legal Aid Justice Center, serving as legal director of its Immigrant Advocacy Program, director of advocacy, and, for five years, its executive director. She now plans to lead ACLU of Virginia to an expansion of the depth and breadth of its services.

“The work the ACLU of Virginia does is vitally important for the Commonwealth we call home,” said Bauer. “While the legislature may have changed and some reforms have become possible that once felt impossible, Virginia was built on a foundation of white supremacy that must be dismantled. There is no shortage of attacks on civil rights and civil liberties in our nation and in our Commonwealth. The ACLU of Virginia is a bulwark against oppression and tyranny, and I’m profoundly honored to have been chosen to continue the great work of this organization and to lead the organization at this time in its history.”

Bauer is a board member of the Charlottesville Immigrant Freedom Fund and a member of the Charlottesville Human Rights Commission, where she was elected chair in December 2020. She is a prolific writer who has authored many reports on the conditions of immigrants and migrant workers in the United States. She has provided testimony and comments before numerous hearings, including to the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee, the U.S. Senate Health and Education Labor and Pensions Committee, and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In 2001, Bauer was named by the Virginia State Bar as Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year, and she was named a Virginia Law Foundation Fellow in 2017.

“I’ve known Mary professionally through her work in Virginia and nationally over many years,” said Claire Gastañaga. “I’m confident that she will be a strong leader for today and the future as the ACLU of Virginia continues to grow its capacity, influence and power.”

Bauer is scheduled to start on June 1.

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About the ACLU of Virginia

The ACLU of Virginia promotes civil liberties and civil rights for everyone in the Commonwealth through public education, litigation and advocacy with the goal of securing freedom and equality for all. For more information on the ACLU of Virginia go to www.acluva.org.