



International Human Rights Clinic  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Center for Law and Justice  
123 Washington Street  
Newark, NJ 07102-3026

Penny M. Venetis, Director  
Member of NJ and NY Bars

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Dear Focus Group Invitee:

*WHY, after decades of entry into the legal profession in ever-growing numbers, do women lag behind men in reaching the upper levels of leadership, compensation, and career satisfaction? **We would like your thoughts.***

Rutgers Law School welcomes your participation in focus groups related to the launch of a cutting-edge study on advancement and retention of women in the New Jersey legal profession. It will be the first study of its kind in New Jersey, gathering information from the following sectors: private law; in-house; government; public interest; academia; and the judiciary.

The study will be conducted by Penny M. Venetis, Esq. and Kirsten Scheurer Branigan, Esq. with the help of Rutgers Law School students. It aims to do more than compile data. It will provide a roadmap of solutions to help the legal profession address the persistent impediments to the advancement of women, the perpetuation of unequal pay, and the departure of female lawyers from the profession. Rutgers Law School seeks to use this study as a model that can be replicated in other states, as well as internationally.

**To create the strongest and most effective study, we need your help!** We are seeking a broad range of participants for focus groups. You qualify to participate in a focus group if you are now (or were in the past) a lawyer working in New Jersey, in whole or in part, in one of the sectors listed above. The focus groups will help us develop survey questions to present to a larger study of participants.

The first focus groups will be *virtual*, in **March and April 2023** during the dates and times listed on the attached sign-up sheet. The second round of focus groups will be conducted in **September and October 2023**. If you cannot participate in the currently scheduled focus groups, there will be other opportunities to participate in the study, and in future focus groups.

*Recognizing that some topics may be sensitive, your participation in the focus groups will be kept anonymous. Also, all answers you provide to focus group inquiries or any part of the study will remain confidential.*

If you are interested in participating in a focus group, or know someone who is, please complete and return the attached **Focus Group Schedule and Consent Form** to Kirsten S. Branigan at **kirsten@ksbraniganlaw.com** and **sara@ksbraniganlaw.com**. You



may also email Professor Penny Venetis at **venetis@law.rutgers.edu**. We will then follow up regarding next steps.

We thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this important work and welcome your involvement to impact positive change in the New Jersey legal community.

Sincerely,

Penny M. Venetis, Esq.,  
Distinguished Professor of Law  
Kirsten Scheurer Branigan, Esq.  
Rutgers IHRC Faculty



**Focus Group Schedule and Consent Form**

**Focus Group Participant Information**

Are you a lawyer working in NJ?

Are you a lawyer who worked in NJ previously, but who has left the practice of law?

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Sector:

Organization’s Approximate Size/Employees:

Provide Organization Name (Optional):

**Private, In-House, Public Interest, Government Focus Groups**

Choose *one or more* available slots from the list below. We will let you know in which focus group slot you have been placed. You will only need to participate in one session. You will then receive a virtual invitation.

Preferred Session[s]:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Public Interest	Friday, March 24	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Public Interest	Friday, March 31	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Public Interest	Friday, April 14	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Public Interest	Friday, April 21	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Private	Friday, March 24	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Private	Friday, March 31	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Private	Friday, April 14	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Private	Friday, April 21	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
In-House	Monday, March 27	9:00 am – 10:00 am
In-House	Monday, April 3	9:00 am – 10:00 am
In-House	Monday, April 10	9:00 am – 10:00 am
In-House	Monday, April 17	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Government	Monday, March 27	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Government	Monday, April 3	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Government	Monday, April 10	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Government	Monday, April 17	11:00 am – 12:00 pm



**Academia and Judicial Sectors:** Indicate the focus group in which you would like to participate in **September-October 2023:** **Judicial:** **Academia:**

**Additional Study Participation Focus Groups 2023-2024:** If you cannot participate in the currently scheduled focus groups but would like to participate in the study by responding to the survey and/or engaging in future post-survey focus groups, please indicate:

If you do not want to participate in the focus groups but would like to be kept apprised of the study, please indicate:

**Procedure/Confidentiality:** As part of this study, you will be placed in a small focus group of less than 10 participants. A moderator will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. One or more note-takers will be present. The focus groups will be audio-recorded for the purpose of accurate and complete data collection. However, your responses will remain confidential, and all recordings will be destroyed after it can be ensured that the content has been accurately captured. While some focus groups may be in person, most will be conducted virtually, via Zoom, or a similar platform. To protect your anonymity and depending on your comfort level., you may opt to be on camera or not, may opt to identify yourself by first name only or omit your name altogether from your screen. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the focus groups and/or otherwise during data collection in connection with the study. The study facilitators will analyze the data, but—as stated above—your responses will remain confidential. ***Your name will not be included in any reports (or other documentation) issued.***

**Benefits/Risks:** Your participation and candor during this study can provide significant insights into the challenges that women continue to face in the legal profession, which can benefit you and others through research-driven solutions. No risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation.

*I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.*

Print name:

Sign name:

Date: