

Michael Fehner Receives 2021 Pro Bono Award from Public Counsel

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Michael Fehner was honored with a 2021 Pro Bono Award from Public Counsel's Immigrants' Rights Project. The Public Counsel Pro Bono Awards recognize legal professionals that have gone above and beyond in providing impactful service to those in need.

Mike was recognized by the Immigrants' Rights Project for his zealous representation of two unaccompanied siblings who came to the U.S. because their caregiver could no longer look after them. Fortunately, they qualified for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a humanitarian benefit for children who have experienced parental abuse, abandonment or neglect. An Irell team obtained the necessary state court orders for both siblings to file petitions for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, but doing so did not stop their deportations. Mike joined the team at this point. He helped file motions to dismiss these kids' removal proceedings based on improper service of the charging documents that initiated the deportation process. These motions motivated the government attorney to propose a deal: he would agree to place these cases on the court's "status docket"—essentially pausing proceedings—until the Special Immigrant Juvenile petitions were approved. Once this had happened, Mike negotiated with the government to dismiss the siblings' removal proceedings altogether. After a good deal of back-and-forth, the government agreed to dismiss both cases, ensuring that these kids will not be deported and paving the way for them to obtain lawful permanent residence.