The ABA Center on Children and the Law is pleased to announce the recipient of the Eighth Annual Mark Hardin Award for Child Welfare Legal Scholarship and Systems Change is William “Bill” Grimm, Attorney and Senior Director of Strategic Advocacy and Child Welfare at the National Center for Youth Law (“NCYL”). Mr. Grimm has dedicated his 40-year career to improving the lives of children in foster care across the United States. Bill has directly represented child clients, initiated impactful class action litigation, drafted legislation, and provided high quality training and technical assistance nationally.

In their nomination letter, one nominator shared: “As head of the Child Advocacy Unit at Legal Aid in Baltimore, Bill mentored a couple dozen young attorneys. We learned from Bill how to be fearless but reasonable and respectful advocates; how to move from individual cases to systemic issues and back again from systemic reforms to individual cases. Above all, we learned how to respect the opinions and views of our young clients, to understand how bureaucracies and even courts overlooked their needs and opinions for the sake of convenience, deference to authority, and mindless cost-saving, and to learn how to litigate effectively to become persuasive and successful advocates for kids. To the extent we made a difference, we owe it to Bill’s leadership, inspiration, vision, and thoughtfulness.”

Mr. Grimm’s colleagues added, “What sets Bill apart from other public interest litigators is his ability to find the balance between fighting relentlessly for his clients and achieving what is realistic within the legal system. He always conceives and executes his litigation in the context of his clients’ real lives. He never loses sight of the faces behind the numbers, and only seeks relief that will lead to tangible benefits for abused and neglected children. Even after years of high-profile impact litigation, Bill can still recite the stories of his juvenile clients in Maryland, as well as the children who have been named plaintiffs in his lawsuits. I know of no other advocate who has combined so effectively years of direct service with impact litigation experience to achieve significant advances for children.”

His colleagues continued: “As reflected in his numerous achievements at Maryland’s LAB and the National Center for Youth Law, Bill is a highly creative and critical thinker who has a deep substantive understanding of legal strategy and the multidisciplinary nature of positive systemic change. He is a giant in the field of child advocacy with a lasting legacy of exceptional accomplishment. At the same time, he is above-all, a modest individual who is kind, generous, and good-humored.”

The Mark Hardin Award will be presented to Mr. Grimm on April 10, 2019, at the annual ABA Center on Children and the Law Conference in Tysons Corner, VA. The award is named for the longtime director of child welfare at the Center on Children and the Law in honor of his history as an early innovator in that field. The award is given to an attorney, law professor, judge or legislator who has shown achievement and commitment to legal scholarship and systems change, such as authoring child welfare legislation, leading a child welfare agency through major system change or having a key role in litigation that resulted in major system change.

Please join us in congratulating Bill Grimm!