



 Bilzin Sumberg

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION  
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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# » Letter from the Chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

It is my pleasure to present Bilzin Sumberg's 2022 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Report – the firm's flagship publication, which highlights our ongoing commitment and efforts to advance the values of DEI internally, and within, the legal profession, and the South Florida community more broadly.

At the start of the year, we took some time to review and evaluate our various initiatives from 2021. This gave us the opportunity to reflect on the things that worked and had the greatest impact on the firm's staff and attorneys and/or our community partners, and consider how we improve from there. We also took the opportunity this past year to go outside the proverbial box, and try new ideas and initiatives and engage new community partners.

Whether supporting the push for equitable legislation, fostering pipeline initiatives aimed at building a more inclusive legal profession that reflects the richness of the communities we live in, or providing pro bono legal counseling to minority- and women-owned small businesses, we strive to have a meaningful impact in whatever we do.

We understand that there will always be room to improve along the way. Indeed, what perhaps makes me most proud of Bilzin Sumberg's efforts in the DEI space is that the firm treats DEI as a priority and as an open and iterative learning experience based on listening—be it the experiences of employees, peers, and colleagues from different backgrounds, those “on the ground” in the community doing the noble work to advance equity and inclusivity and social justice, and/or our better selves through self-reflection on our own biases and shortcomings. In other words, we treat DEI as a process of personal and professional enrichment rather than a simple ideology.

This Report highlights many of those enriching actions and initiatives at our firm over the past year. I hope that you find our work as meaningful and inspiring as we have.

Sincerely,

**Adrian K. Felix**

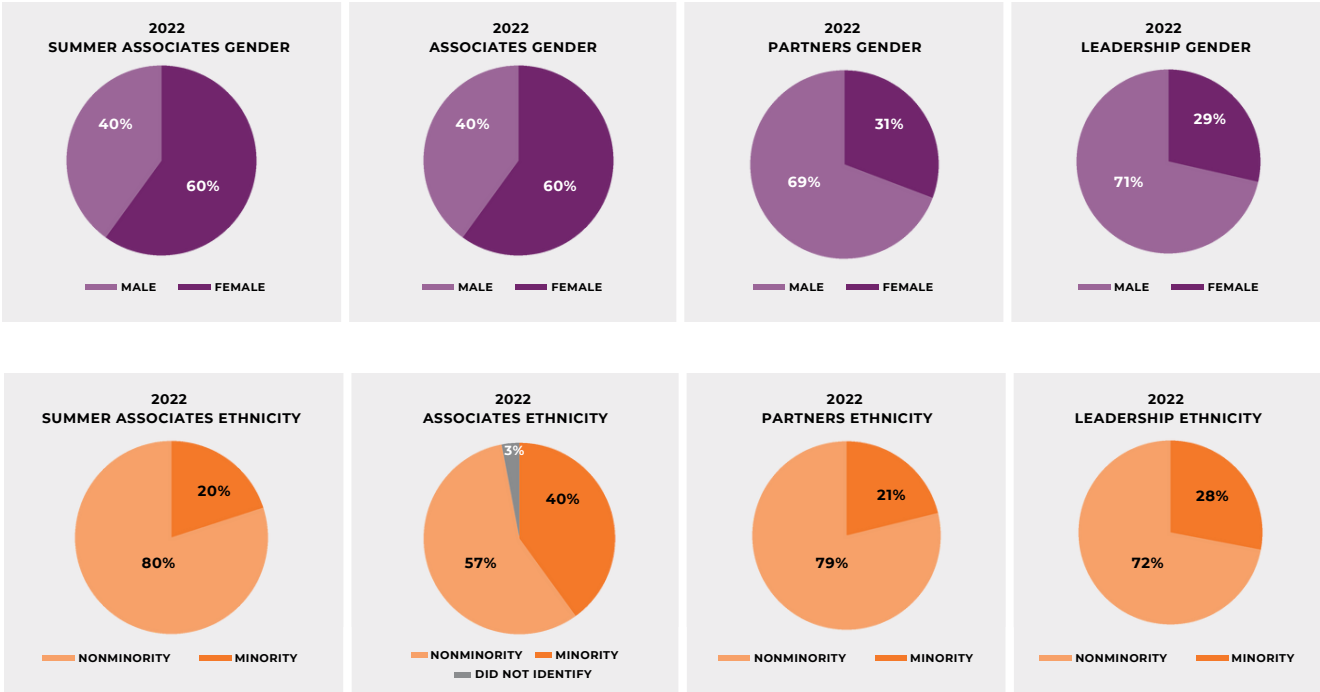
Chair, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee



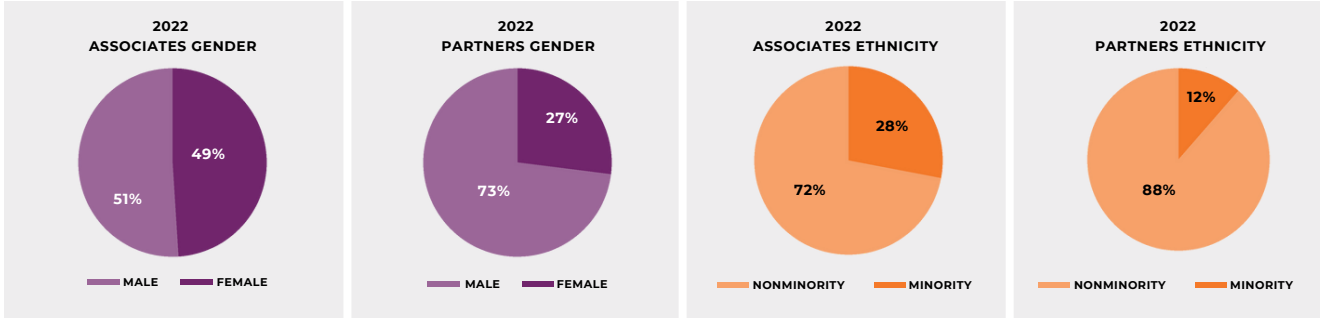
# >> Diversity By The Numbers

The profession of law still has a long way to go to reach the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion that we envision as part of our professional success. There continue to be challenges, old and new, involved at both the pipeline and industry levels in integrating such values. We take pride in making progress across demographics and identities such that each year we get closer to establishing a more equitable and inclusive profession. As part of the firm’s operationalization of DEI, diversity at all levels is a key metric that is tied to our activities and results reporting.

### BILZIN SUMBERG 2022 DIVERSITY NUMBERS



### NATIONWIDE LAW FIRM DIVERSITY STATISTICS\*



\*TAKEN FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LAW PLACEMENT'S 2022 REPORT ON DIVERSITY IN U.S. LAW FIRMS

# » Strategic Partnerships

We know that developing partnerships with organizations that share our values and goals functions as a multiplier in terms of the social impact we can achieve. So, over the past year, Bilzin Sumberg sought out opportunities to both strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones with inspiring local and national organizations pushing the envelope towards a more just and inclusive future.

**Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.:** Bilzin Sumberg continues to work closely with the Community Economic Development Unit (EDU) at Legal Services of Greater Miami. Through the EDU, Bilzin Sumberg attorneys provided pro bono legal services to small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit affordable housing developers in connection with the formation and governance of their operations, preparation of business contracts, and real estate transactions. The firm's counsel serves to buoy and strengthen local minority-business owners and professional communities.

A key example highlighting the firm's deep investment in the local community is its representation of a historic black church located in Miami's West Grove neighborhood, a historically black and underserved community, in redeveloping a property for affordable housing. As part of the firm's pro bono program, a team of attorneys performed a zoning analysis for the church, which had been referred to the firm through the EDU. Our zoning analysis has paved the way for the creation of five new residences owned by the church for housing low-income families.



## Bilzin Sumberg in the Community

Another example of Bilzin Sumberg's commitment to the community is the firm's support of Overtown Youth Center (OYC). OYC's mission is to engage children in the historically black and under-served Overtown neighborhood of Miami in educational and recreational activities that promote their academic, social, emotional, and physical development. The firm has worked to support the organization and its mission since its inception, counseling OYC on lease agreements, land use, zoning, and construction matters in connection with expansions and redevelopments. In 2022, Bilzin Sumberg assisted in the negotiation of lease amendments on behalf of OYC, the creation and amendments of bylaws reflecting its new corporate structure, and in processing a warrant to allow a charter school to operate on the site, thereby significantly expanding the center's community impact. The current facility can accommodate approximately 300 youth; however, through key partnerships with Miami Dade County Public Schools and the City of Miami, the program serves over 1,000 students and families per year.

# » Strategic Partnerships

## Florida International University

Acknowledging its responsibility in cultivating the diversity of the legal profession’s pipeline, Bilzin Sumberg continued its financial support of FIU’s First-Generation Scholarship, which is awarded to first-generation college students whose parents or legal guardians have not earned a bachelor’s degree, with the majority of recipients coming from minority communities. In addition, every year Bilzin Sumberg awards a scholarship to an FIU Honors College student in honor of the memory of the late Damion Dunn, a former attorney at the firm. The Bilzin Sumberg Scholarship in Memoriam of Damion Dunn (“Damion Dunn Scholarship”) goes to an Honors College student of Caribbean descent who intends to pursue a career in law and has demonstrated leadership ability in extracurricular activities. In 2022, the Damion Dunn Scholarship was awarded to Tidjan Simpson, a combined biomedical engineering and electrical engineering major, who was celebrated along with other past recipients of the scholarship at a reception in March held at Bilzin Sumberg’s offices, with FIU Honors College administration officials in attendance.



Damion Dunn

## Black Professionals Network

In 2021, Bilzin Sumberg proudly joined the Black Professionals Network (BPN), a non-profit social learning organization with the mission to advance careers, power up businesses, and build professional pathways for black professionals. Since then, the firm has actively encouraged membership in BPN among its attorneys and has supported the organization through event sponsorships and participation. In 2022, the firm sponsored BPN’s Miami Juneteenth Networking Mixer and Freedom Ball and Concert, in addition to participating in the Black Professionals Summit—BPN’s flagship professional development conference. Bilzin Sumberg views its participation in BPN as an important conduit for outreach to black legal professionals, and as a way for its attorneys to further their own professional development.



# » Recruiting & Diversity Pipelines

Bilzin Sumberg is committed to diversifying the legal profession's pipeline so that the industry and practice of law more accurately reflects our community and showcases the rich diversity of our country. The firm actively participates in recruiting events at HBCU law schools and minority job fairs with the aim of expanding the pool of talented attorneys and other professionals it considers for job openings. The firm has also aggressively moved to increase its retention and promotion of minority and female attorneys. In 2022, half of new attorney hires were female and the same proportion came from minority backgrounds, one component of many aimed at achieving greater equity and inclusivity at the firm.

Bilzin Sumberg also works with the American Bar Association (ABA) to promote DEI in the legal profession through institutional channels. Specifically, the firm has been a long-term sponsor of the ABA Litigation Section of Judicial Intern Opportunity Program (JIOP), whose mission is to provide paid summer clerkship opportunities to students who are members of racial and ethnic groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the profession, students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, students who identify themselves as LGBTQ+, and women.

Over the past 21 years, more than 3,000 students have been placed with federal and

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Adrian Felix**, Litigation Partner, serves as the National Co-Chair of the JIOP, (the ABA Litigation Section of **Judicial Intern Opportunity Program**), and Litigation Attorney **Brianna Sainte**, serves as part of the leadership team for the Miami region that raised **\$45,525** to support **14 student intern placements** in court chambers around South Florida for 2022.



state judges through the Program, including 188 students in 2022. Adrian Felix, Partner and Chair of Bilzin Sumberg's DEI Committee, serves as the National Co-Chair of JIOP, and Bilzin Sumberg attorney Brianna Sainte serves as part of the leadership team for the Miami region. The Miami JIOP team raised \$45,525 to support 14 student intern placements in court chambers around South Florida for 2022.

# » Recruiting & Diversity Pipelines

Just as importantly, Bilzin Sumberg seeks to foster interest in and encourage the pursuit of careers in the legal profession among high school students from diverse backgrounds. For 15 years, the firm has worked closely with the **National Association for Law Placement (NALP)** through the Street Law Legal Diversity Pipeline Program, which introduces students from underrepresented communities about the law and the legal system and profession by connecting them to practitioners from local law firms.

Bilzin Sumberg employees participate in every aspect of the program, including leading in classroom interactive lessons on substantive areas of the law, and later hosting the students in the firm's office for a lunch-and-learn so they can experience firsthand the many professional roles that support a law firm and how the law impacts people in their daily lives.





# Recruiting & Diversity Pipelines

Following are some of the additional student engagement, outreach, and recruitment events in which Bilzin Sumberg participated in 2022:

- Participated in the Southeastern Minority Job Fair, interviewing candidates and recommending recruitments (July).
- Hosted the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) from St. Thomas University Law School for a panel discussion on the different practice areas of the firm. Bilzin Sumberg's

Brianna Sainte moderated the panel, with attorneys Sonja C. Darby, Ellina Berdichevsky, Mamie Joeveer, and David Jessup, Jr., participating in the discussion. Panelists spoke about the firm's diversity, equity, and inclusion work, their professional trajectories, and what they enjoy most about their respective practice areas. BLSA members also engaged with Managing Partner Al Dotson and Bilzin Sumberg St. Thomas alumna, Tax & Private Wealth Practice Group Leader, Jennifer J. Wioncek (October 14).



Bilzin Sumberg attorneys David Jessup Jr., Sonja C. Darby, Mamie Joeveer, Ellina Berdichevsky, and Brianna Sainte participated in the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) from St. Thomas University Law School's panel discussion on the different practice areas of the firm.

# » Recruiting & Diversity Pipelines

- Sponsorship of Miami-Dade Urban Debate League (MDUDL):** The MDUDL tournament, brings together middle and high school students from urban Title I schools, the majority of whose attendees identify as students of color. The mission of MDUDL is to empower youth through competitive academic debate to become active learners, critical thinkers, and engaged global citizens who are honest and effective advocates for themselves and their communities. In September 2022, Bilzin Sumberg attorneys formed part of a group that met with the Miami Superintendent to discuss the inclusion of debate as a full-time curriculum component within the Miami-Dade school system, with the MDUDL serving as a pilot program for participating schools. The proposal was met with enthusiasm, with discussions ongoing on implementation of such a program.
- Bilzin Sumberg College Essay Program:** Bilzin Sumberg attorneys assisted in reviewing college essays of local high school students in partnership with United Way of Miami-Dade and Overtown Youth Center (program runs October-November).



Bilzin Sumberg College Essay Program Zoom call.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Over **30 schools** from Miami-Dade County Public Schools have participated in the MDUDL debate seasons since the start of the League in 2015, thereby serving over **500 students** since that time.
- Nearly **100% of participating schools** classify as Title I schools, meaning no less than **40% of the students** from such schools are from low-income families. Serving Title I schools has been a core tenet of MDUDL's mission.
- The MDUDL has partnered with local universities and colleges, regularly hosting tournaments at the campuses of Florida universities.

# » Recruiting & Diversity Pipelines

- University of Miami OUTLaw and National LGBTQ Task Force - Supporting the drive for equality and equity across orientations and identities:** On March 1, 2022, Bilzin Sumberg hosted the University of Miami OUTLaw Alumni Networking Event with the goal of having UM LGBTQ+ and ally students meet LGBTQ+ and ally judges and attorneys. The event served as a valuable opportunity to facilitate mentorships between law students and legal professionals from the local, supportive LGBTQ+ legal community and its allies. A long-time partner of Bilzin Sumberg, OUTLaw seeks to advance the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community at the University of Miami School of Law by educating the law school community concerning gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender politics and culture.
- Bilzin Sumberg sponsored the SAVE Champions of Equality Gala on September 10, 2022:** Hosted by Miami Beach Commissioner David Richardson, the event featured an inspiring lineup of speakers and honorees on timely topics for the LGBTQ+ community, and included a silent auction to raise money for the SAVE Foundation, one of South Florida's longest serving organizations dedicated to protecting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) against discrimination.
- Bilzin Sumberg sponsored the 26th Annual Task Force Gala hosted by the National LGBTQ Task Force on October 22:** The gala invited LGBTQ+ people and their supporters to honor the community's heroes, and raise funds for allied organizations serving the LGBTQ+ community in South Florida.



David Jessup, left, with guest, Samantha Topper Berns at the SAVE Champions of Equality Gala.



Brian Adler and Mayor of Miami-Dade County Daniella Levine Cava at the 26th Annual Task Force Gala hosted by the National LGBTQ Task Force.

# » Professional Development & Inclusive Workplace

Bilzin Sumberg prides itself on curating year-round, thought-provoking programming aimed at elevating the consciousness of all firm employees on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. To this end, 2022 featured a robust series of speakers from academia, the legal profession, the non-profit sector, and other areas to enlighten the firm on both historical and current topics with timely and valuable takeaways. The firm's 2022 Speakers Series program included:

- **Black History Month:** In honor of Black History Month, Bilzin Sumberg invited Bill Gladson, State Attorney for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Gilbert King to discuss a moving episode of racial injustice involving four young Black men in mid-20th century Florida, known as "The Groveland Four." King is the author of the acclaimed book *Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America*, and Gladson was instrumental in recently having the indictments of the four young men tossed out and the sentences and judgments imposed on them set aside. King and Gladson detailed the harrowing series of events and miscarriage of the criminal justice system following the specious allegation of rape and assault made against the young men, while chronicling the challenging work that each undertook to uncover facts surrounding the case and new evidence that ultimately culminated in their recent exonerations some 70 years later. In addition to informing participants on an oft-forgotten chapter of Florida's race relations history.

The presentation reinforced the importance of due process and prosecutorial integrity as key pillars of equity and justice.

Bilzin Sumberg also participated in a Black History Month educational school program organized by the Honorable Judge William L. Thomas, Circuit Court Judge for the 11th Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County. Bilzin Sumberg attorneys prepared and presented classroom presentations of historical black figures for students, with the goal of raising awareness of Black achievements that shaped the political, economic, and social development of American society.



Honorable Judge William L. Thomas,  
Circuit Court Judge for the 11th Judicial Circuit  
in and for Miami-Dade County.

# » Professional Development & Inclusive Workplace

- Inspiring Women Leaders:** In honor of Women’s History Month, Bilzin Sumberg invited a set of accomplished local leaders from the public and private sectors to discuss the continuing challenges that women face in advancing professionally, as well as what they believed to be the way forward for greater gender equity in management roles and organizational leadership. Topics discussed included the role of mentors and sponsors for career advancement, the advantages of community and professional associations for building strong networks and leadership skills, and the importance of persistence and transparent communication in achieving equity goals. Panelists: Arden Karson, Managing Principal of Karson & Co; Judge Mindy A. Mora of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District Of Florida; Crystal Wagar, Miami Shores Councilperson and Partner at LSN Partners, LLC; moderated by Jane Wooldridge, Senior Director for Journalism Sustainability and Partnerships at the Miami Herald.
- Juneteenth Panel:** In celebration of the national Juneteenth holiday, Bilzin Sumberg invited two accomplished black leaders to share their insights on timely issues related to equity and social justice. T. Willard Fair, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Miami, and Topeka K. Sam, Founder and Executive Director of Ladies Of Hope Ministries, offered thought-provoking ideas about constructively dealing with the challenges faced by marginalized communities. Both Fair and Sam focused much of their discussion on the need to eliminate seemingly innocuous practices that often lead to unintended discriminatory consequences, such as the widespread employment practice of asking job applicants to disclose jail time or criminal convictions, which tend to foster unconscious bias. Both panelists recognized the key role of safe and accessible housing in lifting marginalized minorities out of poverty. They also stressed that while racial diversity in professional settings was important, it was just as critical that companies seek diversity of experience, specifically seeking to integrate individuals with a history of adversity into their professional families.

- Hispanic Heritage Month 305 Break - Celebrating the Diversity of the Hispanic Community:** During National Hispanic Heritage Month, Bilzin Sumberg’s DEI Committee organized a series of afternoon snack breaks for its employees with the goal of raising awareness of the diversity of Miami’s Hispanic community. Each “305” Break featured unique treats and drinks from a distinct Latin American community, allowing firm staff and attorneys to socialize and appreciate the delicious contributions of Hispanic culture to the South Florida community.



# » Commitment to Social Justice

In order for our commitment to DEI to be transformative, it is crucial that our efforts also address the obstacles to social justice in our country. Bilzin Sumberg has carefully studied the optimal ways to lend its legal bench to pro bono initiatives seeking to tackle the systemic drivers of social injustice in our country.

In the summer of 2022, Bilzin Sumberg formalized an engagement with the Southern Poverty Law Center (“SPLC”) to support the organization’s ongoing efforts to use the court system and other forms of advocacy to expose and combat hate, racism, and unfair laws throughout the U.S. with the goal of bringing about meaningful reforms. Since the firm was engaged, its attorneys have invested over 150 hours assisting SPLC in analyzing U.S. constitutional law questions, reviewing and analyzing the legislative histories of various U.S. and Florida laws, compiling news reports, video content, and social media posts, and preparing and organizing public records requests.

Bilzin Sumberg also continued its multi-year partnership with the Law Firm Anti-Racism Alliance (“LFAA”) this past year. Working alongside approximately 400 law firms across the nation, Bilzin Sumberg lawyers are continuing to provide pro bono resources to address systemic racism across a range of sectors and industries. This partnership provides all Bilzin Sumberg lawyers with access to LFAA’s Bulletin Board, a repository of pro bono opportunities aimed at combating systemic racism in various ways.



Raquel Fernandez at the 2022 Pro Bono Awards.

Raquel Fernandez, Partner and chair of Bilzin Sumberg’s Pro Bono program, has continued to serve in her role as a member of the LFAA’s Education Working Group. Raquel and fellow members are building coalitions among diverse stakeholders to develop scholarships, lead and contribute to impact litigation, aid in legislative and policy-change efforts, promote awareness of racial inequality in education, and increase funding for anti-racism efforts in schools nationwide.

Adrian Felix continues to serve as chair of the Addressing Community subgroup for the LFAA’s Banking Working Group, which seeks to solicit feedback from local leaders in various metropolitan areas on the needs and concerns of underserved minority communities when it comes to banking and financial services.

# » Awards & Accolades

Bilzin Sumberg’s multifaceted efforts to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within the firm, across the legal profession, and in the wider South Florida community garnered it notable awards and accolades in 2022.



Most notably, the Diversity & Flexibility Alliance, an organization that partners with law firms, associations, and corporations to foster inclusive corporate cultures, recognized Bilzin Sumberg as one of only 57 major law firms out of over 200 that saw over half of the firm’s 2022 partner promotions go to women. Their Tipping the Scales award is included in the organization’s 2022 New Partner Report, a yearly compilation and examination of publicly released data from its members, including the nation’s largest and top-grossing law firms. Generated since 2012, the report examines the gender breakdown of attorneys promoted to partnership in the U.S. offices of researched firms.

In addition, Albert E. Dotson, Jr., Managing Partner, and Javier F. Aviñó, Practice Group Leader for Land Development & Government Relations, were recognized as “Law Firm Leaders” by Lawyers of Color, a non-profit organization devoted to promoting diversity in the legal profession, advancing democracy and equality in marginalized communities, and conducting research regarding the intersection of the legal profession and social justice. The inaugural edition of Law Firm Leaders serves to provide in-house counsel with a comprehensive and readily accessible directory of attorneys of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descent who are legal experts, as well as decision-makers within their law firms.

**Albert E. Dotson, Jr.**  
Managing Partner



**Javier F. Aviñó**  
Practice Group Leader,  
Land Development & Government Relations



# » Thank You to Our DEI Committee Members

All the accomplishments outlined in this report would not have been possible without the exceptional commitment and resolve of the members of Bilzin Sumberg’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. Achieving DEI in our places of work and the places we call home can be challenging but also deeply rewarding. The committee members never let their dedication to our DEI efforts slip. From everyone at Bilzin Sumberg, we thank you for making our firm and our community richer, more embracing, and more forward-looking.

## 2022 Members of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee



**Adrian K. Felix**  
Chair



**Michelle R. Weber**  
Firm COO



**Enza Boderone**  
Chair,  
Strategic Partnerships



**Jennifer E. Fine**  
Strategic  
Partnerships



**Liana Kozlowski**  
Strategic  
Partnerships



**Brianna H. Sainte**  
Chair, Recruiting &  
Diversity Pipeline



**Paul J. D'Alessandro, Jr.**  
Recruiting &  
Diversity Pipeline



**Benjamin Mitchel**  
Recruiting &  
Diversity Pipeline



**Ellina Berdichevsky**  
Chair, Professional  
Development &  
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**Marshall R. Pasternack**  
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**Ernesto Alarcon**  
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**John V. Chibbaro**  
Chair, Commitment  
to Social Justice



**Brittany Chung**  
Commitment  
to Social Justice



**David Jessup, Jr.**  
Commitment  
to Social Justice



**Phillip S. Sosnow**  
Commitment  
to Social Justice



**Stephanie Berrios**  
Events  
Specialist



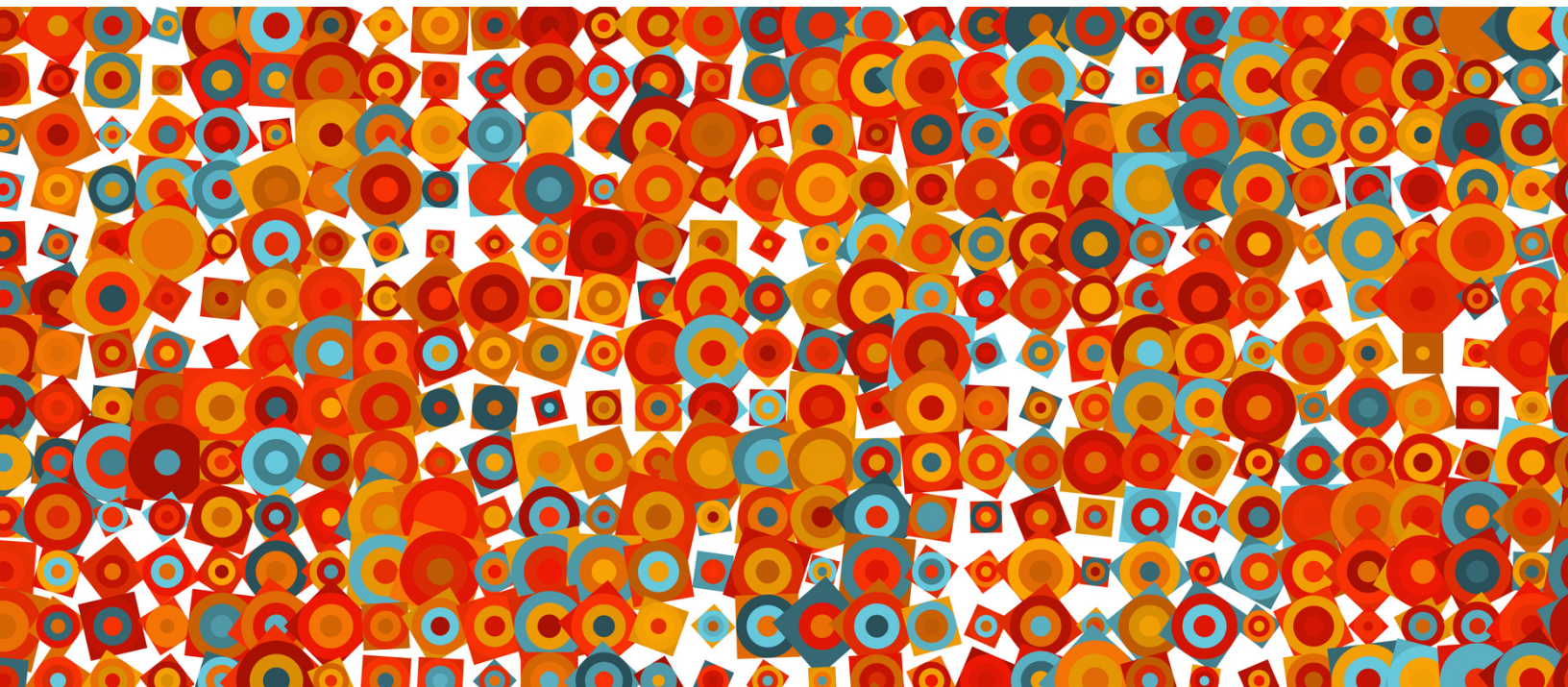
**Laura Galeano**  
Chief Marketing  
Officer



**Jackie F. Gallego**  
Chief Human  
Resources Officer



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