

Good afternoon, Thank you so much. It is an incredible honor to be nominated and to stand here in a room full of advocates from across the country.

I've been thinking a lot about this award and what it means to get national recognition as a young attorney who has only been practicing a few years. I realize that ultimately, this award isn't about me. It's about my family and coworkers who supported me along the way. It's also about my clients who continue to inspire and motivate me.

First, a thank you to my family – especially my wonderful mom. Growing up, she refused to let me use the phrase “I can't” and she encouraged me to speak my mind. She has cheered me on every step of the way and is even here to help me celebrate today.

I'd also like to acknowledge my boss – a man who has dedicated his entire career to helping low income families. Over the past 4 years he has taught me more than I ever learned in law school. He has inspired me, supported me and given me the gift of autonomy to try new things.

This award is also for the clients I have worked with so far and those I will work with in the future. Clients like Carolyn, who lost her eyesight due to untreated diabetes. Her blindness was completely preventable but she didn't have access to healthcare. In North Carolina, our state continues to deny coverage to hundreds of thousands of people like Carolyn who need care, but can't afford it. Her resilience and optimism in the face of injustice motivate me to keep fighting.

I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to serve others. It is a privilege to be a voice for justice and to have a platform to advocate for social change. Thank you to everyone here today who makes this work possible and sustainable. It is truly an honor to work with and learn from you all.