



Inajo Davis Chappell

Of Counsel

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Cleveland - 216.583.7140

Inajo focuses her practice on the representation of numerous exempt organizations, ranging from social service agencies to arts groups, health organizations, foundations, community development corporations, educational, and governmental institutions. In addition to her work representing nonprofit organizations and public institutions, Inajo handles a variety of legal matters for for-profit businesses. Her legal practice focuses on various aspects of corporate law and governance, general business transactions, and commercial real estate acquisition, development, construction, and financing. She has served as bond and company counsel to a variety of governmental and corporate clients. Inajo has particular expertise representing school districts in the provision and delivery of educational programming and services to disabled students. An active civic and community volunteer, Inajo serves on the boards of several nonprofits and was recognized for the positive impact she has had on her community by being named to *Savoy Magazine's* Most Influential Black Lawyers list.

Practices & Industries

- Employment & Labor
- Business Law

Education

- Yale University (B.A., 1982)
- Columbia Law School (J.D., 1985)

Bar Admissions

- Ohio
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Ohio
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio
- Supreme Court of Ohio

Professional Affiliations

- Ohio State Bar Association
- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- In Counsel With Women
- Society of Benchers, Case Western Reserve University Law School (*Public Member*,

2004-present)

- Cleveland Bar Association (*Former Board Member and Executive Committee Member*)

Community Involvement

- The MetroHealth System (*Former Board Member; Former Chair, Governance Committee*)
- ERIEBANK Ohio Advisory Board (*Former Board Member*)
- Say Yes Cleveland Scholarship, Inc. (*Former Board Member; Former Board Chair, Former Secretary and Chair of Governance Committee*)
- Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (*Former Board Member; Former Chair*)
- The Cleveland Foundation (*Former Chair, Grantmaking and Community Engagement Committee; Former Vice Chair of the Board of Directors; Former Chair, Governance and Audit Committees*)
- Medical Mutual of Ohio Charitable Foundation (MMOCF) (*Former Board Member*)
- Ohio Board of Voting Machine Examiners (*Former Member and Board Chair*)
- Barbara Byrd-Bennett Foundation for Cleveland's Children (*Former Board Member and Secretary*)
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland (*Former Board Chair and Board Member Emeritus*)
- American Red Cross Greater Cleveland Chapter (*Former Board Member and Secretary*)
- Hitchcock Center for Women, Inc. (*Former Board Member and Secretary*)
- Cleveland Leadership Center (*Former Board Member and Co-Chair, Selection Committee*)
- Hathaway Brown School (*Former Board Member; Chair, Trustee/Governance Committee*)
- Vocational Guidance Services of Cleveland (VGS) (*Former Board Member and Secretary*)
- Center for Community Solutions (CCS) (*Former Board Member*)
- United Black Fund (*Former Board Member*)
- Shoes & Clothes for Kids (*Former Board Member*)
- Collaborative To Organize Mount Pleasant (COMP) (*Former Board Member*)
- Alcoholism Services of Cleveland, Inc. (Recovery Resources, Inc.) (*Former Board Member*)
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. – Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter (*Member*)
- United Way of Greater Cleveland Risk Management Committee (*Former Member*)
- Greater Cleveland Sports Commission (*Former Board Member*)

Awards & Honors

- Ohio State Bar Foundation Ramey Award for Distinguished Community Service (2022)
- Named to *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Nonprofit/Charities Law (2011-2022)
- Designated Best Lawyers Nonprofit / Charities Law “Lawyer of the Year” in Cleveland (2015; 2022)

- Named to the Ohio Super Lawyers list (2007; 2016-2022)
- Smart Business Magazine Smart Women Award in the Progressive Woman category (2021)
- AV Preeminent® Peer Review Rated – Martindale-Hubbell®
- Named a “Black Leader Worth Watching” by Profiles in Diversity Journal (2020)
- “Notable Women in Law,” *Crain’s Cleveland Business* (2018)
- Named one of the Most Influential Women in Corporate America by *Savoy Magazine* (2019)
- Named one of the Most Influential Black Lawyers in America by *Savoy Magazine* (2015, 2018)
- Named a “Woman Worth Watching” by Profiles in Diversity Journal (2015)
- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association Women in Law Making a Difference Award (2014)
- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association Diversity & Inclusion Innovation Award (2014)
- Honored to be among the contributors featured in The Stephanie Tubbs Jones Art Gallery at Cleveland Hopkins Airport and the “*Reflections – The Many Facets of Stephanie Tubbs Jones*” tribute book
- *Crain’s Cleveland Business* “Women of Note” (2010)
- Helen K. Jones Woman of Strength Memorial Award (2009)
- Hathaway Brown School Alumnae Achievement Award (2008)
- *Northern Ohio Live* Rainmaker (Law) (2005)
- YWCA Women of Achievement Award (2001)
- Leadership Cleveland (Member, Class of 2001)

Experience

Public Law/School Law and Special Education Law

- Experience representing school districts in the provision of educational programming and services to disabled students, providing counsel on a variety of legal issues related to the education of individuals with disabilities, defending placement and programming decisions of school districts, counseling clients relative to disciplinary and other issues impacting disabled students, participating in mediation, administrative hearings, and judicial proceedings relative to compliance with the federal statutes governing the education of disabled children, including the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the ADA of 1990, as amended by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA).
- Experience handling Ohio Sunshine Law compliance, including public records request disputes, bidding requirements and bid protest matters, and a variety of public and school law issues.

Nonprofit

- Experience handling a variety of nonprofit matters, including: grantmaking and grant

agreements; strategic collaboration, merger, and affiliation agreements; nonprofit director and trustee liability; tax aspects of charitable contributions; establishing and maintaining for-profit subsidiaries; nonprofit executive compensation issues; administration of endowment funds and other restricted gifts; private inurement and intermediate sanctions; self-dealing; charitable sales tax and property tax exemptions; conflict of interest policies; incorporating and obtaining exempt and "public charity" status for new charities; and limits on lobbying and participation in political campaigns.

- Experience providing training workshops to board members on governance issues and fiduciary obligations.
- Handled and documented tax-exempt financing projects for real estate/facility expansion projects for exempt organizations.
- Guided an entrepreneur and nonprofit as it grew from one school and two employees to nine schools and over 250 employees.

General Business

- Handled a variety of transactions for business owners, including sale and purchase of ownership interests.
- Prepared and negotiated a variety of business and employment agreements, including collective bargaining agreements.
- Counseled clients regarding competitive bidding compliance, tax and collection workouts, and general business matters.
- Prepared and negotiated license and lease agreements for use, sale, or other disposition of real estate, proprietary information, and personal property.

Real Estate& Commercial Lending

- Experienced in documenting real estate construction loans for lending institutions and borrowers.
- Represented owners and developers in securing acquisition and development loans and financing for both new construction and extensive rehabilitation/renovation projects, including residential, commercial, and recreational facilities.
- Documented and closed numerous real estate transactions, construction loans, and credit lines for acquisition, development, and construction of commercial real estate facilities (a big chain drugstore and strip mall facilities with national retail and restaurant tenants) in Florida, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, as counsel to a national banking association.

Capital Markets/Municipal Securities

- Served as bond counsel, company counsel, trustee counsel, and underwriter/placement agent counsel to governmental, corporate, and bank clients, documenting a variety of bond financing transactions, including Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) and Tax-Exempt Private Activity Bond issues.
- Drafted all bond documents, legislation, and legal opinions, and reviewed and revised, as necessary or required, Bank and Underwriter counsel documents on letter of credit-enhanced bond financing transactions, where the proceeds from these tax-exempt 501(c)(3) bonds were used to acquire, develop, and construct office buildings, warehouse, and other facilities.

Middle Market Equipment Leasing

- Documented and closed tax-exempt municipal lease transactions for a local community college district, involving the acquisition and installation of telecommunications equipment.
- Documented and closed a tax-exempt municipal lease transaction for the largest school district in the State of Ohio that funded the acquisition of heating, cooling, lighting, and other equipment and improvements.
- Prepared and negotiated lease and equipment purchase agreements, legal opinions, and drafted or reviewed all ancillary documents required.

Employment & Labor

- Prepared separation and severance agreements, employment agreements, mediation agreements, and EEOC/OCRC position statements.
- Conducted and prepared numerous investigation reports.
- Represented clients in mediations, arbitrations, and grievance hearings.
- Appeared in numerous administrative hearings and defended clients against gender, race, disability, age discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and other employment claims.