

May 25, 2021

To: All Members of Congress

At the heart of the American promise of equal justice is civil legal aid, which helps people protect their basic human needs when they are put in jeopardy by legal problems. The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the urgency of the need to expand access to this critical help, and therefore the undersigned general counsel from 207 of the largest corporations in America write to request that Congress provide a substantial increase in the budget for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) for FY2022.

The success of our businesses is built on healthy and thriving communities. This requires that our justice systems function fairly and effectively for everyone, regardless of the amount of money they have. However, people are routinely forced to navigate complex legal matters without assistance, risking devastating outcomes that create severe hardship and permanently undermine the stability of individuals and families. Civil legal aid can prevent this, including by:

- Protecting families at risk of homelessness from unfair eviction or unnecessary foreclosure;
- Preventing veterans from falling into poverty by securing access to earned benefits;
- Helping victims of natural disasters access documents and resources needed to rebuild;
- Rescuing elderly individuals from abuse and neglect, and recovering assets lost to fraud;
- Ensuring the physical safety of abused children and spouses by acquiring protective orders and breaking links between abuser and survivor

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the incidence of these and many other legal problems. In July, LSC reported that more than 85 percent of its grantee organizations reported an increase in requests for assistance in each of the areas of housing, income, and domestic violence. At the same time, higher rates of unemployment, particularly for people of color and for women, have grown the population of eligible clients. This has placed a further strain on organizations that were already unable to assist every individual seeking help.

LSC is not only the single largest source of funding for legal aid, but also the underpinning national structure that ensures help is available to Americans in every ZIP code, and provides leadership in times of disaster and crisis. It is in these times that we return to our bedrock principles. Even as the COVID-19 pandemic begins to subside, its social and economic consequences will be severe and lasting, making the need for Congress to deliver greater support for equal justice more important than ever. In doing so, you will protect American families from harm while strengthening our communities, workforces, and economies.

Sincerely,

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