

May 17, 2022

To: All Members of Congress

Civil legal aid effectuates our country's commitment to equal justice. It ensures that our legal systems treat low-income families the same as those who can afford to pay for legal counsel. The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is the central infrastructure of this work. However, LSC's budget has remained stagnant relative to other federal spending for the last quarter-century. As a result, in 2019, close to half of the eligible clients seeking help from an LSC grantee could not receive any assistance at all. Evidence suggests this number has grown considerably since then.

The social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have created serious lasting challenges for many in our communities. Civil legal aid is one of the most effective tools to resolve these problems but in every state, the need for assistance exceeds available services. The undersigned general counsel and legal leadership from 162 of the largest corporations in America write to ask that Congress provide LSC at least \$700,000,000, the amount requested in the President's Budget for FY2023.

LSC estimates that well over two-thirds of households in rural areas, and households including children, veterans, and people with disabilities experience one or more civil legal problems each year. More than half of LSC grantee clients are women. Access to legal help can prevent them and many others from experiencing unnecessary but severe outcomes from civil legal problems, including helping homeowners and renters avoid eviction and foreclosure, seniors make informed decisions and avoid fraud and abuse, and survivors of domestic violence safely escape a parent or spouse.

As both lawyers and business leaders, we know that leaving legal issues unaddressed weakens our economy and workforce. This has direct consequences for the success of our companies. We also know that Black and Latino families, Native Americans, and other people of color are disproportionately low-income, putting them at disproportionate risk for civil legal problems. Investing in civil legal aid is necessary to address the racial disparities prevalent within our legal systems.

LSC is the only entity with the ability to ensure that legal assistance is available to people in every ZIP code. This makes outcomes in courts across the entire country more fair and just. It also increases the effectiveness of other important community programs and services, such as in a Medical-Legal Partnership or after a natural disaster. Most fundamentally, however, it protects the notions of democracy and equal justice that are the guiding principles of America.

We believe that significantly increasing funding for LSC is, therefore, a uniquely important priority for Congress. This will protect the people and communities that sustain our businesses and strengthen our country's shared promise of justice for all.

Sincerely,

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