

May 14, 2024

To: All Members of Congress

The undersigned are general counsel and chief legal officers from 147 of America's largest corporations. We write to urge Congress to strengthen its investment in equal justice by increasing funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) as you consider appropriations for FY2025.

LSC is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by Congress 50 years ago, in 1974, and is headed by a bipartisan board of directors whose 11 members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Civil legal aid plays a critical role in laying the foundation for a safe, stable and thriving society, and ensures that our courts and legal processes do not treat people differently because they cannot afford to pay for legal help. LSC forms the central infrastructure of civil legal aid, providing grants to organizations that serve people in every county in the country. More than one in six people across the country are eligible for these services.

We understand the need for a responsible budget and for setting priorities to ensure one. Funding for the Legal Services Corporation has not risen comparably to other federal programs, while need has only increased. LSC maximizes the impact of its funding by cultivating pro bono involvement from private attorneys, including volunteers from many of our companies. Still, at current funding levels, low-income Americans do not receive any or enough help for 92% of their civil legal problems and LSC's grantees must turn away half of people who seek their assistance.¹ Total discretionary spending has increased at a rate more than five times as high as LSC's appropriations.

As business leaders, we understand that unaddressed legal issues weaken our economy and workforce. Civil legal aid creates stability that forms the foundation of a resilient middle class. Legal aid helps homeowners and renters avoid eviction and foreclosure; helps seniors avoid fraud and abuse; helps families escape domestic violence; and helps people get back on their feet after a natural disaster disrupts their lives. While inflation rates have stabilized, its effects remain, and legal issues faced by our communities continue to rise. The stability secured through legal services is critical to the success of the American economy, including our businesses. Civil legal aid also helps develop and maintain the strength of the American workforce, on which our companies rely. Legal aid resolves barriers to employment, occupational licenses, and educational programs.

Insufficient funding forces people to navigate legal systems alone, and can result in destructive outcomes across many areas of their lives. This is particularly true in many rural areas and southern states, where there tend to be far fewer non-LSC resources than in large cities. Federal investment is even more critical to the stability of communities in these areas. LSC is the only entity with the ability to ensure that legal assistance is available to people in every zip code.

We believe that increasing funding for LSC is a uniquely important priority for Congress and urge you to do so. This not only secures safety and stability for the people and communities that sustain our businesses, but also strengthens our country's shared promise of justice for all.

¹ Legal Services Corporation. 2022. The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans. Prepared by Mary Slosa, Slosar Research, LLC. Available at <https://justicegap.lsc.gov>.

Sincerely,

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