



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

May 2, 2017

The Honorable Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan
1421 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Kind
1502 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Sensenbrenner
2449 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman
1217 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sean Duffy
2330 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Gallagher
1007 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

To the Honorable Wisconsin Senators and Congressional Delegation:

As members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, we are writing to respectfully request that you support continued funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

The LSC helps veterans and their families, survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking, homeowners and renters, families with children, farmers, those with disabilities, the elderly, and many others across the nation and in our fine state of Wisconsin.

To be eligible for LSC-funded services, a person must have income below 125% of the federal poverty level. In Wisconsin, almost 1 million people (17% of our state's population) live below 125% of the federal poverty level and cannot afford legal assistance when they are confronting a critical civil legal problem. Our constituents who are eligible for assistance (in civil legal matters only, not criminal) funded by the LSC span every demographic and live in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

In 2016, the LSC allocated more than \$5 million dollars of high-quality, free civil legal aid in Wisconsin. The two Wisconsin organizations that receive funding from the LSC help solve nearly 12,000 civil legal aid problems for low-income Wisconsinites every year. They also leverage the federal LSC investment into more than \$8 million annually in other grants and funding, and achieve more than \$17 million in monetary benefits for their low-income clients. Further, they engage Wisconsin's private bar attorneys to donate more than \$1 million in pro bono legal services every year.

While other organizations work to address low-income people's civil legal needs, the LSC is the only funder of civil legal aid that requires that grantees serve every county – so all of our constituents, but particularly those of us representing rural and suburban districts, will be harmed by cuts to or elimination of the LSC. The consequences of LSC elimination will be

immediately felt: Wisconsin Judicare, one of the Wisconsin LSC grantees, which serves the northern part of the state, has indicated that if the LSC funding is eliminated, it will have to close its doors.

The civil legal aid provided by the LSC grantees also has positive effects on the effective and efficient operation of the courts. The Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) of the state Supreme Courts is a non-partisan organization comprised of the Chief Justices and Judges of every state that has been a strong advocate of funding for the LSC. The CCJ recently issued a policy paper showing that adequate funding for the LSC is necessary to better meet the demand for legal services, ensure justice for all, and ensure that court operations are not bogged down by *pro se* litigants.

Congress established the LSC in 1974 to operate as a private, nonprofit cooperation to promote equal access to justice. Investment in civil legal aid is one of the most effective ways to help Wisconsin residents navigate the justice system. The modest federal contribution to civil legal aid is a critically important investment that allows thousands of Wisconsinites to safeguard their basic legal rights at minimal cost.

We urge you to support funding for the Legal Services Corporation in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CSJ) Appropriations bill to ensure that this basic legal assistance will continue to be provided to Wisconsinites in urgent need.

Sincerely,



Representative Cody Horlacher
33rd Assembly District
Chairman, Legislative Council Study Committee on Access to Civil Legal Services

Representative Jimmy Anderson
47th Assembly District

Representative Joan Ballweg
41st Assembly District

Representative Peter Barca
64th Assembly District

Representative Terese Berceau
77th Assembly District

Representative Jill Billings
95th Assembly District

Representative Rob Brooks
60th Assembly District

Representative Dave Considine
81st Assembly District

Representative David Crowley
17th Assembly District

Representative Steve Doyle
94th Assembly District

Representative Eric Genrich
90th Assembly District

Representative Evan Goyke
18th Assembly District

Representative Gary Hebl
46th Assembly District

Representative Dianne Hesselbein
79th Assembly District

Representative Gordon Hintz
54th Assembly District

Representative Debra Kolste
44th Assembly District

Representative Jesse Kremer
59th Assembly District

Representative John Macco
88th Assembly District

Representative Cory Mason
65th Assembly District

Representative Beth Meyers
74th Assembly District

Representative Jeffrey Mursau
36th Assembly District

Representative Tod Ohnstad
65th Assembly District

Representative Warren Petryk
93rd Assembly District

Representative Sondy Pope
80th Assembly District

Representative Daniel Riemer
7th Assembly District

Representative Keith Ripp
42nd Assembly District

Representative Melissa Sargent
48th Assembly District

Representative Katrina Shankland
71st Assembly District

Representative Christine Sinicki
20th Assembly District

Representative John Spiros
86th Assembly District

Representative Mark Spreitzer
45th Assembly District

Representative David Steffen
4th Assembly District

Representative Amanda Stuck
57th Assembly District

Representative Lisa Subeck
78th Assembly District

Representative Gary Tauchen
6th Assembly District

Representative Chris Taylor
76th Assembly District

Representative Ron Tusler
3rd Assembly District

Senator Janet Bewley
25th Senate District

Senator Jon Lipenbach
27th Senate District

Senator Dave Hansen
30th Senate District

Senator LaTonya Johnson
6th Senate District

Senator Chris Larson
7th Senate District

Senator Jerry Petrowski
29th Senate District

Senator Janis Ringhand
15th Senate District

Senator Fred Risser
26th Senate District

Senator Jennifer Shilling
32nd Senate District

Senator Lena Taylor
4th Senate District

Senator Kathleen Vinehout
31st Senate District

Senator Bob Wirth
22nd Senate District