



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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September 21, 2020

Honorable Paul A. Sarlo
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
496 Columbia Boulevard, First Floor
Wood-Ridge, New Jersey 07075

Honorable Eliana Pintor Marin
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
263 Lafayette Street, First Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07105

Re: State Budget Funding for Legal Services of New Jersey

Dear Senator Sarlo and Assemblywoman Pintor Marin:

I write to you on behalf of the New Jersey State Bar Association in support of the increase in funding requested by Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) in the Fiscal Year 2021 State Budget. LSNJ seeks to increase funding by \$8 million in order to address the ever-increasing need for civil legal services resulting from the unprecedented losses due to COVID-19. The NJSBA urges you to support this request when the budget is sent to the Governor.

The Association recognizes this request comes at a difficult time in our State's economic climate and does not take this request lightly. The urgency of this request looms large in the anticipation of an upswell of need resulting from the anticipated end of the eviction moratorium, collections efforts, problems accessing medical care, and an untold number of other issues that our membership and LSNJ faces daily.

In the face of record numbers of unemployed New Jerseyans, the need for legal representation far surpasses that of prior years when LSNJ operated on a budget that did not fully meet its needs. Nevertheless, LSNJ strives to provide necessary services to those most in need, representing them on eviction matters, foreclosures, devastating money judgments, domestic violence, human trafficking, denials of unemployment compensation, and numerous other matters.

Providing legal representation for individuals helps not just that individual, but all parties because attorneys can navigate the appropriate resources, help mediate a common goal, and resolve many disputes without the need to resort to costly litigation. For example, people facing eviction are over 30 percent more likely to remain in their homes. Without such representation, New Jersey may face other consequences far more dire than exists today.

Other states recognize the need for increased funding for Legal Services. Virginia has appropriated an additional \$4 million and Maryland has appropriated an additional \$5 million. Both states have populations less than New Jersey. In light of the increase in demand and the already documented shortfall in LSNJ's budget to meet this demand, the NJSBA urges you to support LSNJ's \$8 million funding increase.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and thank you for your service in these difficult times.

Very truly yours,



Kimberly A. Yonta
President

cc: Hon. Stephen Sweeney, Senate President
Hon. Craig J. Coughlin, Speaker
Angela Scheck, NJSBA Executive Director