



Wisconsin Equal Justice Fund, Inc.
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April 6, 2017

The Honorable Ron Johnson
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Gwen Moore
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Gallagher
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Kind
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Sensenbrenner
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for Funding of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC)

Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Equal Justice Fund, Inc. (WEJF), I am writing to urge you to preserve the funding of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

WEJF is the primary source of private funding for Disability Rights Wisconsin and Wisconsin's two LSC supported legal aid providers: Wisconsin Judicare and Legal Action of Wisconsin (LAW). Since our inception in 1997, we have raised \$5 million from lawyers, law firms, and corporations in Wisconsin to support the important work of our legal aid providers. However, private funding alone is not nearly enough to sustain this important work, and the partnership of the federal government is absolutely critical to the ability of these organizations to assist Wisconsin residents.

The devastating impact of the loss of LSC funding on Wisconsin residents cannot be overstated. LSC funding in Wisconsin provides vital high-quality civil legal aid to low-income Wisconsinites, including thousands of veterans, seniors, consumers, families facing foreclosure, people with disabilities, and survivors of domestic violence every year. While these services are essential to all Wisconsin communities, our state's rural

residents would be especially harmed as Wisconsin Judicare is the **only** legal aid program available in Wisconsin's 33 Northern counties.

Civil legal issues can have devastating, life altering consequences for people who are forced to face the justice system alone. Every day, LAW and Judicare provide crucial advocacy and legal advice to those who have nowhere else to turn. Here are just a few examples:

- Asai, a mother of two, was beaten by her husband one night simply while doing the dishes. LAW attorneys helped Asai obtain an order of protection and guided her through pursuing a divorce, custody arrangements, and prosecuting her husband.
- Ted, a widower in his 80s, unwittingly signed over power of attorney to a neighbor who ultimately put his name on the deed to Ted's home and the title of Ted's car, and stole thousands of dollars from his bank accounts. LAW attorneys worked over 160 hours to successfully help Ted regain his financial standing.
- Megan was in the midst of successfully completing a mortgage loan modification agreement and yet suddenly found herself facing a foreclosure action by the lender. A Judicare attorney represented Megan in court, and the judge rejected the lender's request for a foreclosure judgment. Megan successfully completed the loan modification and prevented herself and her children from becoming homeless.

LAW and Judicare currently serve almost 10,000 people each year, which means that there are thousands more success stories like those above. While we understand that within this fiscal environment difficult decisions about spending must be made, we believe that access to justice is not an expendable luxury but an indispensable manifestation of our country's most fundamental values. Just as investing in America's roads and bridges are vital to our transportation infrastructure, LSC is a vital part of the infrastructure that undergirds our justice system, ensuring that fair treatment is not dependent on a person's ability to pay for it.

We urge you to restore funding for the Legal Services Corporation in the federal budget.

Sincerely,



Matthew Lynch
Partner, Foley & Lardner LLP (Madison)
President, WEJF Board of Directors



Melissa Sullivan
Executive Director
Wisconsin Equal Justice Fund, Inc.