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CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN

December 12, 2024

Clerk of Supreme Court
Attention: Deputy Clerk – Rules
PO Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

RE: Petition 24-05 Adjustment to Attorney Assessment for Public Interest Legal Services Funding

To the Justices of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin:

I am writing on behalf of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin in support of Petition 24-05 to increase the Public Interest Legal Services Fund (PILSF) assessment. As an organization, our mission is to end domestic violence and create safe communities for survivors and their families. We believe that increasing access to civil legal aid is vital to the stabilization and dignity of our communities. This Petition is an important step in that direction.

An individual's ability to access civil legal aid can be lifesaving. Civil legal aid keeps people in their homes and in family-sustaining jobs, empowers individuals and families by resolving consumer debts and ensuring rightful access to income supports, secures support and protects the rights of crime victims, and helps to extricate survivors of domestic violence from abusive situations so they can achieve safety and independence.

Access to legal help is distressingly difficult, particularly for low-income Wisconsin residents. While one in seven Wisconsin residents are financially eligible for civil legal aid, legal aid providers are only able to provide help for 7% of the civil legal problems faced by Wisconsin's low-income residents. The gap between the need for services and their availability holds individuals and families back from achieving safety, stability, and economic security. At End Abuse, we understand that increasing the Public Interest Legal Services Fund is one critical mechanism for increasing access to civil legal aid for our community and all of Wisconsin.

VICTIMS OF CRIME:

Our organization works closely with civil legal aid providers to help domestic violence survivors navigate the legal system. The civil legal aid providers we work with help our mutual clients enforce their rights in the legal system and ensure their voice is heard in a

court process often manipulated by harm doers. When we can work together with legal aid providers, we can equip victims of crime with the tools to find a path forward to secure a safer future for themselves and their families. Our partnerships with legal aid providers plays a key role in providing wraparound support for survivors, with our legal partners providing legal advice and representation with critical legal issues. Sadly, we know that for every survivor that can access civil legal help, many more survivors cannot due to chronic underfunding of civil legal aid.

HOUSING:

Domestic violence and housing instability are intimately linked; for us housing is homicide prevention. Survivors self-identify stable housing and the resources to maintain stable housing as one of their most pressing needs. Approximately 73% of unmet requests to DV programs in 2023 were for emergency shelter, hotels, motels, transitional housing, and other housing. Achieving housing stability is a key component of breaking the cycle of violence and achieving economic security. Civil legal aid providers play a critical role in helping survivors understand their rights, resolve disputes with landlords, secure habitable housing, and stay housed. Unfortunately, we know that for every survivor who can access legal help, many more are turned away simply due to lack of capacity of civil legal aid providers.

Therefore, we urge you to adopt Petition 24-05 to increase the PILSF assessment fee, which would increase the provision of civil legal services to low-income Wisconsinites. The positive impact of the Petition would reach far beyond the financial value of the assessment itself. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment in support of this proposed rule.



Monique Minkens
Executive Director
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin