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DEC 16 2024

CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN



New Beginnings

— APFV —

12/10/24

Clerk of Supreme Court
Attention: Deputy Clerk-Rules
P.O. Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

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

Dear Chief Justice Ziegler and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court:

I am writing on behalf of New Beginnings in support of Petition 24-05 to increase the Public Interest Legal Services Fund (PILSF) assessment. As an organization, our mission is to provide cost-free services to victims of violent crime. 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 for and protects the rights of crime victims, and helps to extricate survivors of domestic violence from unsafe situations so they can achieve independence and thrive. Access to civil legal aid, however, is distressingly difficult. While one in seven Wisconsinites are eligible for civil legal aid, only 7% of the civil legal problems facing Wisconsin's low-income residents receive any legal help. The gap between the need for services and their availability holds families back from achieving safety, stability, and economic security. At New Beginnings, we understand that increasing the PILSF assessment is one critical mechanism for increasing access to civil legal aid for the population we serve.

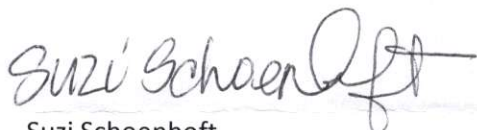
Our organization depends on civil legal aid providers to help the survivors of violence that we represent. Civil legal aid providers seek recourse for crime victims when their rights have been violated, and ensure that crime victims have a voice in the courtroom and in determining their path forward. Further, civil legal aid providers help protect survivors' freedom and independence by safeguarding safety and

privacy, creating safety plans, obtaining restraining orders and providing representation in family court, and providing information about their rights. Our partnership with civil legal aid providers has been a key component to ensuring survivors are able to be made whole following abuse. Sadly, we also know that for every survivor who can access civil legal help, many more cannot because chronic underfunding has left civil legal aid providers without enough resources to meet the full need.

Victims of abuse or crimes do not have a right to a free attorney. This can leave many older adults with nowhere to turn if they are being physically or financially harmed, even though the consequences of victimization can be devastating. In 2022, there were more than 9,600 reported incidents of elder abuse or neglect in Wisconsin, and nearly a quarter of the reports complained of financial exploitation—a growing trend across the state. Our organization depends on civil legal aid providers to help elderly victims of crime or abuse understand their legal rights and obtain justice for the crimes or financial exploitation they have endured. One in seven Wisconsin seniors are eligible for civil legal aid, which far outpaces the capacity of legal aid to provide representation. Increasing funds to civil legal aid would allow senior victims of crime to maintain their dignity and safeguard the assets they've worked for their entire lives.

There are far more low-income Wisconsinites with civil legal problems than there are legal aid lawyers to serve them, and many of those individuals face multiple concurrent civil legal problems. An investment in civil legal aid is an investment in justice and in the future health of Wisconsin's legal system. Supporting an increase in the PILSF assessment ensures due process for every Wisconsinite and recognizes the important role of the legal profession in closing the justice gap. We are grateful that the legal community generously shares in this responsibility.

Therefore, we urge you to consider adopting Petition 24-05 to increase the PILSF assessment, 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 on this proposed rule.



Suzi Schoenhof
Executive Director
New Beginnings APFV

How can we help you?

- * Crisis counseling with an advocate by appointment (preferred) or on a walk-in basis (for emergencies).
- * Safety planning, including step-by-step help obtaining a restraining order.
- * Legal advocacy, including information on how the criminal & civil courts work; possible accompaniment.
- * A 24-hour telephone crisis line for victims of domestic and/or sexual abuse.
- * Support groups for women, teens and children recovering from the trauma of abuse.
- * Information about an optional Sexual Assault Exam (SANE exam) and accompaniment through the process.
- * Referral to emergency safe housing.
- * Individual counseling with a licensed professional.
- * Advocacy and counseling for victims of elder abuse (age 60 and older).
- * Information about other relevant community resources, based on individual circumstances.



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Whitewater, WI 53190
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Monday-Friday 8-4:30



newbeginningswalworth.com

New Beginnings APFV is an equal opportunity service provider and employer. New Beginnings does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion, creed, ancestry, political affiliation, gender or gender identification, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, citizenship or economic status.

Free interpreter services are provided for those who need language assistance or are deaf or hard of hearing.

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Is Someone Hurting You?



New Beginnings
—APFV—

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

newbeginningswalworth.com



New Beginnings helps survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, stalking & human trafficking and their affected family members.

SAFE PLACE



All services are **FREE & CONFIDENTIAL**, available in **English and Spanish**.
24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

About Us:

New Beginnings APFV helped more than 1,000 families impacted by domestic and sexual violence in 2021.

Services are available for current and past survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault, whether the abuser was a spouse, partner, friend, caregiver, boyfriend/girlfriend, acquaintance or family member.

New Beginnings APFV was founded in 1978 as The Association for the Prevention of Family Violence and received its 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit organization in 1979. Staff have been helping victims of violence for more than 40 years.

New Beginnings is funded by federal, state and county grants, United Way, private foundations, donations and fundraising.

To support our mission, visit:

www.newbeginningswalworth.com

Abuse is Mistreatment of One Person by Another.

END THE SILENCE, BREAK THE CYCLE



Emotional/Psychological Abuse

- Being screamed at, sworn at or called crazy, stupid, worthless, etc.
- Isolating or attempting to isolate from family, friends, work and/or school
- Threatening with a weapon; threatening to kill, harm or take away their children
- Hurting pets or destroying property
- Repeated false allegations of cheating
- Trying to destroy the victim's self-worth
- Intentionally interrupting a person's sleep or meals

Physical Abuse

- Inflicting or attempting to inflict bodily injury, such as shoving, punching, biting, hitting with an object, grabbing, burning or strangling
- Forcing food or water, or refusing to provide them
- Withholding access to resources necessary to maintain health, such as prescriptions, medical devices or care

Sexual Abuse

- Coercing or forcing participation in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity
- Forcing someone to watch sex acts or look at pornography
- Limiting a person's reproductive rights, such as preventing use of contraception

Other Forms of Abuse:

Stalking: A pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, such as following the person, sending unwanted items or monitoring every move, causing the victim to feel fear

Cyberstalking: Using technology, such as the internet or GPS, to monitor or harass someone

Financial Abuse: Taking a partner's money or refusing to give money for household expenses, forbidding the person to work, or sabotaging a person's work or employment