



United Way
of Marathon County

FILED

NOV 12 2024

CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN

November 7, 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 United Way of Marathon County in support of Petition 24-05 to increase the Public Interest Legal Services Fund (PILSF) assessment. As an organization, our mission is Uniting to Thrive with a goal of lifting 10,000 community members to financial stability by 2033. 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 Wisconsinites. 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 United Way, 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.

There are far more low-income Wisconsinites with civil legal problems than there are lawyers to help them. The reality is that many of those people face multiple legal problems concurrently. An investment in civil legal aid is an investment in justice and the future health of Wisconsin's legal system. Supporting an increase in PILSF moves us toward a future of due process for every Wisconsinite and recognizes the leadership role the legal profession can take in closing the justice gap. We hope the legal community will pave the way for increased access to justice through this investment in civil legal aid.

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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Sargent".

Jeff Sargent
Executive Director/CEO
United Way of Marathon County

Learn more at www.unitedwaymc.org

705 S. 24th Avenue
Suite 4008
Wausau, WI 54401
715-848-2927
715-848-2929 (Fax)