

April 25, 2023

To: All Members of Congress

The undersigned are the general counsel and chief legal officers from 208 corporations, including many of the largest in America. We write to urge Congress to strengthen its investment in equal justice by increasing funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that Congress itself founded back in 1974. LSC is headed by a bipartisan board of directors whose eleven members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. LSC is the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans in the nation. It provides grants to civil legal aid organizations that serve people in every zip code in the country, and works to ensure that our courts and legal processes do not treat people differently because they cannot afford to pay for legal help.

As business leaders, we understand the need for a responsible budget. We also understand the need to allocate greater resources to address unmet demands for assistance. Funding for LSC has not risen comparably to other federal programs. Total discretionary spending has increased at a rate more than five times as high as the LSC budget has since 1995. This has had severe consequences for families across our country. Today, low-income Americans do not receive any or enough legal help for 92% of their civil legal problems, and roughly half of people who seek help from an LSC grantee are turned away.¹

When people are forced to navigate legal systems alone, they face destructive outcomes across many areas of their lives. For example, legal aid protects adults and children experiencing domestic violence and helps them to escape their abuser permanently, prevents people from losing their homes to unnecessary eviction or foreclosure, enables communities to rebuild after natural disasters, and protects older Americans from fraud and neglect.

Access to justice is critical to the success of the American economy, including our businesses. Legal aid plays an important role in developing and maintaining the strength of the American workforce on which our companies rely, by resolving barriers to employment, occupational licenses, and educational programs. It also creates financial stability for families that forms the foundation of a resilient middle class and healthy consumers of our products and services.

LSC has a unique ability to identify and address areas of particular geographic and substantive need. People in rural areas and many southern states generally have access to far fewer non-LSC resources than those in large cities, making the federal investment in those places even more critical. In 2021, LSC established a Rural Justice Task Force to focus even more closely on this problem. LSC further maximizes the impact of its funding by cultivating and supporting pro bono involvement from private attorneys, including volunteers from many of our companies.

Civil legal aid makes the promise of equal justice real. It is not only a fundamental American value, but it also has measurable economic benefits for families and communities, prevents further harm to vulnerable individuals, and improves public safety by addressing social problems. We ask that you help our country's legal aid organizations achieve these objectives by increasing the level of investment in LSC.

¹ Legal Services Corporation. 2022. The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans. Prepared by Mary Slosar, Slosar Research, LLC

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