

June 19, 2020

To: All Members of Congress

Equal access to justice is a foundational promise of our country and a bulwark against severe hardship for low-income Americans, particularly in times of national crisis. The undersigned are general counsel and legal leadership from 204 of the largest corporations in America. We write to urge you to increase funding for civil legal aid by robustly funding the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) in FY2021.

As lawyers and business leaders, we know that the health of our communities and our economies is dependent on the fair administration of justice. It can be difficult, if not impossible, for people without training and knowledge in the law to properly navigate our legal systems. However, every day low-income Americans are forced to do just that, usually in cases where they are pitted against experienced legal counsel.

Civil legal aid evens this unfair playing field and helps people protect their health, home, income, and family. This will be of particularly critical importance over the coming months as the legal consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to develop and become clearer. Strong support for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) will enhance the ability of civil legal aid organizations to respond to the widespread economic, social, and health-based hardship this pandemic is likely to cause.

LSC's experience leading in times of regional and national crisis by bringing together expert networks and coordinating local responses is well-established, and we must support its ability to do so now. It is the single largest source of funding for free legal help, and its grantees serve clients in every ZIP code, including families who are in danger of losing their homes, veterans returning from military service, victims of domestic violence, elderly individuals, and survivors of natural disasters.

We all have a responsibility to help mitigate the worst effects of this current crisis. The ability of our companies to do this through pro bono service is dependent on the LSC infrastructure, which allows us to partner with local legal services organizations that can reach clients in need and provide training and supervision to our volunteers in order to deliver effective volunteer representation to the people in need in our communities.

Bipartisan support for LSC is a clear demonstration of our country's commitment to its deeply-held value of equal justice under law and of Congress' understanding about the power of civil legal aid to improve the lives of American people. At this critical moment, where the legal needs of low-income Americans are set to multiply, we ask that you further expand access to justice and help our communities respond to the consequences of this pandemic by providing a significant increase for LSC in FY2021.

Sincerely,

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