



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

March 10, 2021

House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Minority Lead Scott,

The Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging (m4a) are writing in support of the funding request made by Civil Legal Services for the upcoming biennium. We regularly see civil legal aid attorneys help older adults in Minnesota, as well as collaborate with our staff to help us help older adults and their stakeholders. We are proud of the partnership with Legal Aid to address a full range of services needed by older adults. Staff from Legal Aid accept referrals, consult with staff, and work with us to find ways to serve older adults across our region. Attorneys from Legal Aid are professional, well-skilled, and provide compassionate advocacy for their clients.

Many older adults live on a fixed income and cannot afford a private attorney to help them. Even when they do, many private attorneys are not versed in the important and complex government programs that older adults must navigate. Civil legal aid helps to close the justice gap, promote family safety, ensure individuals' basic needs are met, and helps older adults maintain their independence.

Due to resource limitations, civil legal aid is not able to meet the enormous demand for their services and is not able to offer competitive salaries relative to other public sector law firms. It is important to fund civil legal aid. m4a fully supports their funding request.

Respectfully,

m4a Directors

Handwritten signature of Darla Waldner in black ink.

Darla Waldner, Dancing Sky AAA

Handwritten signature of Jason W. Swanson in black ink.

Jason W. Swanson, Minnesota River AAA

Handwritten signature of Dawn Simonson in blue ink.

Dawn Simonson, Metropolitan AAA

Handwritten signature of Kristi Kane in purple ink.

Kristi Kane, Arrowhead AAA

Handwritten signature of Earlene Buffalo in black ink.

Earlene Buffalo, Minnesota Indian AAA

Handwritten signature of Laurie A. Brownell in black ink.

Laurie A. Brownell, Southeastern MN AAA

Handwritten signature of Lori Vrolson in black ink.

Lori Vrolson, Central MN Council on Aging