



3/9/2021

House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee

Attn: Chair Becker-Finn and Minority Lead Peggy Scott

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Minority Lead Scott,

I am writing in support of the funding request made by Civil Legal Services for the upcoming biennium. As Executive Director of Pearl Crisis Center, an organization serving victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault in Mille Lacs County, I am proud of our partnership with Legal Aid to address a full range of services needed by the people we both serve. Staff from Legal Aid accept referrals, consult with staff, and work with us to resolve issues related to safety, housing, and income. Legal Aid is also a vital part of the Mille Lacs County Domestic Violence Court, which works to hold offenders accountable while meeting victim needs. Attorneys from Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid are professional, well-skilled, and provide zealous advocacy for their clients. If it were not for Legal Aid assisting in the legal needs of victims, we would not be able to provide this service on our own. Legal Aid attorneys have compassion for those who cannot afford legal representation and are always available to help our advocates process through some very difficult situations. Our clients are often put into financial barriers when they decide to leave an abusive relationship and too often cannot afford to pay a private attorney leaving them without representation in the court system, which can leave victims extremely vulnerable in their safety. This is where Legal Aid helps so much. We have partnered with Legal Aid on many projects together throughout the past twenty years and our partnership is extremely valuable to victims and our advocates.

Because I can see the difference that Legal Aid makes to the people we serve, I am aware of the great importance of civil legal aid to our community, and to the entire state of Minnesota. Civil legal aid helps to close the justice gap, promote family safety, ensure individuals' basic needs are met, protects health, and helps the Court system operate more effectively and efficiently.

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 I fully support their funding request. If you have any questions concerning our support for this request, please contact me at 320-982-2901 or jpearsonpcc@gmail.com. Thank you for your time in reading my request for increased funding for Legal Aid and I hope you find it worthy of support in keeping victims of domestic and sexual violence safe.

Sincerely,

Judy Pearson, LSW
Executive Director