

**ABA Commission on the Future of Legal Services**

**Open Hearings**

**Saturday, August 1, 2015**

**Written Testimony**

Good Morning, my name is Nichayette Vil. Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. Please forgive my accent and grammar, French is my first language. I live in Naperville, IL.

I was working for Sara Lee and as a new benefit, they offered a legal plan. I signed up but did so thinking I would never use it. I didn't have a legal issue when I signed up. My divorce had just settled so I thought, I will never use this program anyway but the fees were small so I signed up since it was a bit like health insurance.

Six month after signing up, I received a legal letter from the Property Management where I used to lived with my ex-husband, saying that he hasn't been paying the assessment. They were planning to kick him out of the unit so they can rent it to recover their dues. They also said they were going to sue me even though I moved out long ago. I was devastated since I had spent my 25 years of saving in the divorce. That's how I contacted the Legal Plan.

I called the Legal Plan then they gave me several attorneys, just like my PPO Health Plan, I got to choose my lawyer. I called Mike Maslanka and he told me he needed to confirm my eligibility and that he would get back and he did. The process was very easy.

We first chatted on the phone and then we met in person. I gave him all my divorce paperwork and the letter I received from the property manager. After that first in-person meeting, we communicated by phone, email and mail.

He totally treated me like any other client, I was worried that he might spend less time with me because I was a legal plan client. What made my situation interesting was that 3 months later I left Sara Lee for another company. I contacted Mike saying how devastated I was since I got the job offer of my career but I was afraid I would have to spend out of pocket for legal representation. He said, not so, since we are representing you, we will keep representing until the case is over. What a relief! I had a great attorney and I didn't need to choose between feeding my family and paying attorneys.

My experience was absolutely amazing. I literally lobbied my current job to get legal plan and now we do have a legal plan as part of the benefits. Mike Maslanka, my attorney represented me very well. After the property management company recovered their dues, they tried to get me

to buy the unit back and demanded a satisfaction letter. I was able to get my credit in order and buy real-estate. This plan literally saved my family financially.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you how important the legal plan was to me and my family.

## Sample Testimonials from Legal Plan Clients

**Legal plans ensure their members receive quality customer service and so they survey their members to get feedback on the legal plan and the legal services provided. Many times, this feedback leads to member stories that they want to share with others. Attached please find member stories regarding their experience with legal plans. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact GLSA and the Standing Committee on Group & Prepaid Legal Services at [Tori.Wible@AmericanBar.org](mailto:Tori.Wible@AmericanBar.org)**

"I am so grateful [the legal plan] was available to me. My spouse and I had tons of anxiety over the legal issue we were facing, which was affecting my performance at work, and having immediate access to a legal service was a huge benefit both emotionally and financially."

"I've been very pleased with the plan. I can now comfortably contact an attorney whenever I have pending legal issues. This is a very nice benefit that I was thrilled to take part in. Overall I couldn't be happier with this benefit. The price is reasonable, the service exceptional and the scope of coverage is just about perfect for me."

After moving out of an apartment with time left on the lease, the apartment management tried to say we broke the lease, even though we continued to pay rent. My attorney successfully represented us in court, establishing a new precedent definition of "constructive eviction" in New Jersey law. I could not have brought the action myself, and his professionalism and expertise was very impressive. I was extremely fortunate to have been a member of a Legal Plan when this unexpected situation arose.

My mother passed away recently leaving many issues with her estate. I contacted the Legal Plan and was provided a list of attorneys in my area to help my sister and me through a complex process. After review, I chose an attorney in Worcester, Mass. I want to thank you for including this attorney in your program. The attorney was more than my sister and I could ever have expected. He was responsive, patient and brilliant in his expertise of law. Not only did he have excellent presentation skills, but he also had excellent people skills. I would not hesitate to refer anyone to him for any legal needs or requirements. Thank you again for having this firm as part of your service.

"Two things -- it covered the cost of my divorce 14 years ago. That was a big help. I also used the form templates for my Mom's Power of Attorney for Healthcare and Financial. She is suffering from Alzheimer's so it saved a lot of time and money not having to go to an attorney for these documents. The legal plan simply supplies me with reassurance that if I need any legal help, I have a place to go and not worry about the cost."

"The first thing that the legal plan has done for me is given me peace of mind. It is assuring that I have legal insurance in my common interactions throughout life. I have met with my attorney several times to discuss family law issues with my daughter and her son, as well. My lawyer was why my wife and I have a Will today. He facilitated the entire process and made sure that our interests were looked out for. I have recommended the legal plan to others and will continue to."

"I invest in the legal plan every year because it gives me peace of mind in knowing that if I need it, I have legal representation at a cost I can manage. The most vivid example of how important legal

support can be surrounds my divorce from my ex-husband. He refused to take his bi-polar medication and consequently made life miserable and dangerous for myself and my young daughter. My plan attorney walked me through the process from start to finish, staying with me all the way. The settlement she obtained for me was fair and just. I continue coverage each year because peace of mind is "priceless."

"Last year, I was summoned to court for small claims. My dog had bitten a child. I was unable to afford an attorney and I was very nervous. I called and was given an attorney to speak with for consultation. I was able to consult with the attorney on two separate occasions prior to the court date. He gave me great advice and helped put my mind to ease a little more. I am happy to say, the court date went well and I prevailed in the case. I can honestly say without the advice of the attorney, I am not sure I would have been as well prepared as I was. I am very grateful to him for all his help. I am also very grateful our company offers this as an option to its employees. This was not the first time I used your services and will not be the last, I am sure. It gives me a great peace of mind having it."