March 29, 2017

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-310, The Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano:

As you consider programs that deserve funding, we respectfully request continued funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill.

LSC helps military families, homeowners and renters, families with children, farmers, the disabled, the elderly and many others across the country, including nearly 112,000 veterans and their families. Over 60 million Americans, or 21% of the U.S. population, currently qualify for legal assistance from LSC funded programs. LSC-funded legal aid programs help constituents who live in households with annual incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines – in 2017, $15,075 for an individual and $30,750 for a family of four. Eligible constituents span every demographic and live in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

According to a 2009 study commissioned by LSC’s Board of Directors, "Documenting the Justice Gap in America," many LSC grantees turn away half of the people who qualify and seek civil legal assistance due to the lack of resources. State studies consistently show that only 20% of the civil legal needs of the eligible population are being met.

Investment in civil legal aid is one of the most effective ways to help Americans navigate the justice system. The modest federal contribution to civil legal aid – only 38% of total funding for LSC-supported legal aid programs, and only 25% of all legal aid funding in the United States – is an important investment, allowing millions of Americans to safeguard their basic legal rights at minimal cost.

The Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) of the state Supreme Courts, a non-partisan organization comprised of the Chief Justices and Judges of every state has been a strong advocate of funding for LSC. The CCJ issued a policy paper showing that the large number of unrepresented citizens overwhelming state courts has negative consequences on the effective and efficient operation of the courts. The paper concludes that adequate funding for LSC is necessary to better meet the demand for legal services and to ensure access to justice for all.
LSC provides basic field funding, which supports essential client constituent services in every congressional district. A reduction in LSC's funding level for FY 18 would result in many more otherwise qualified people being turned away from civil legal assistance organizations. This would result in hundreds of thousands of fewer citizens being served by LSC nationwide, and would reduce access to the judicial system proportionately.

Congress established LSC to operate as a private, nonprofit corporation to promote equal access to justice and to provide grants for high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income persons and families. LSC distributes more than 90% of its total funding to 133 independent nonprofit legal aid programs that provide legal assistance to low-income individuals and families in every congressional district. Programs that receive LSC grants help the most vulnerable, such as military veterans seeking disability benefits, families facing unlawful evictions or foreclosures, and women seeking protection from abuse.

We hope you will do everything possible to ensure that the Legal Services Corporation receives funding in the FY 2018 CJS Appropriations bill to ensure that critical legal assistance will be provided to those in urgent need.

Sincerely,

FY2018 Legal Services Corporation Funding Letter Signatures (148 signatures):

Rep. Steve Cohen
Rep. Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Rep. Susan W. Brooks
Rep. Ryan A. Costello
Rep. John J. Faso
Rep. Leonard Lance
Rep. Patrick Meehan
Rep. David G. Reichert
Rep. Steve Stivers
Rep. Michael R. Turner
Rep. Alma S. Adams
Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragan
Rep. Joyce Beatty
Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Rep. Earl Blumenauer
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici
Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Rep. Brendan F. Boyle
Rep. Robert A. Brady
Rep. Anthony G. Brown
Rep. Julia Brownley
Rep. G.K. Butterfield
Rep. Michael E. Capuano
Rep. Tony Cardenas
Rep. Andre Carson
Rep. Kathy Castor
Rep. Judy Chu
Rep. David N. Cicilline
Rep. Yvette D. Clarke
Rep. Wm. Lacy Clay
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver
Rep. James E. Clyburn
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly

Rep. Jim Cooper
Rep. Jim Costa
Rep. Joe Courtney
Rep. Joseph Crowley
Rep. Elijah E. Cummings
Rep. Danny K. Davis
Rep. Susan A. Davis
Rep. Peter A. DeFazio
Rep. Diane DeGette
Rep. John K. Delaney
Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro
Rep. Suzanee K. DelBene
Rep. Val Butler Demings
Rep. Mark DeSaulnier
Rep. Theodore E. Deutch
Rep. Debbie Dingell
Rep. Lloyd Doggett
Rep. Michael F. Doyle
Rep. Keith Ellison
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Rep. Elizabeth H. Esty
Rep. Bill Foster
Rep. Lois Frankel
Rep. Marcola L. Fudge
Rep. Tulsi Gabbard
Rep. Ruben Gallego
Rep. Vincente Gonzalez
Rep. Al Green
Rep. Raoul Grijalva
Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez
Rep. Colleen Hanabusa
Rep. Alo Lee L. Hastings
Rep. Denny Heck
Rep. Brian Higgins
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Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee
Rep. Pramila Jayapal
Rep. Hakeem S. Jeffries
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Rep. William Keating
Rep. Robin Kelly
Rep. Ron Kind
Rep. Ann McLane Kuster
Rep. James R. Langevin
Rep. Rick Larsen
Rep. John B. Larson
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Sander Levin
Rep. John Lewis
Rep. Ted Lieu
Rep. David Loeseback
Rep. Zoe Lofgren
Rep. Alan S. Lowenthal
Rep. Ben Ray Luján
Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham
Rep. Stephen F. Lynch
Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney
Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney
Rep. Doris O. Matsui
Rep. Jerry McNerney
Rep. Gregory W. Meeks
Rep. Gwen Moore
Rep. Seth Moulton
Rep. Jerrold Nadler
Rep. Richard B. Neal
Rep. Donald Norcross
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Tom O'Halleran
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.
Rep. Jimmy Panetta
Rep. Donald Payne, Jr.
Rep. Chellie Pingree
Rep. Stacey B. Plaskett
Rep. Jared Polis
Rep. David E. Price
Rep. Mike Quigley
Rep. Jamie Raskin
Rep. Cedric L. Richmond
Rep. Kathleen M. Rice
Rep. Linda T. Sánchez
Rep. John P. Sarbanes
Rep. Janice Schakowsky
Rep. Adam B. Schiff
Rep. David Scott
Rep. Terri A. Sewell
Rep. Carol Shea-Porter
Rep. Kyrsten Sinema
Rep. Albio Sires
Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Darren Soto
Rep. Jackie Speier
Rep. Thomas R. Suozzi
Rep. Mark Takano
Rep. Dina Titus
Rep. Norma J. Torres
Rep. Niki Tsongas
Rep. Juan Vargas
Rep. Marc A. Veasey
Rep. Filemon Vela
Rep. Nydia Velázquez
Rep. Timothy J. Walz
Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
Rep. Peter Welch
Rep. John A. Yarmuth