

STATE OF TEXAS

RESOLUTION

of the

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Supporting Adequate Funding for Civil Legal Aid in Texas

WHEREAS, the Texas Judicial Council is the policymaking body for the Texas Judicial Branch, created under chapter 71, Texas Government Code; and

WHEREAS, the Council is charged with improving the administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Judicial Council embraces the principles that our nation promises justice for all, not just for those who can afford to pay for it; and

WHEREAS, the most recent U.S. Census survey reports that nearly 5.2 million Texans qualify for civil legal aid and a University of Texas at San Antonio study from 2015 found that only 10% of the civil legal needs of low-income Texans were being met; and

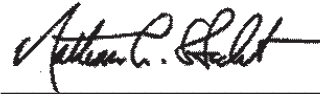
WHEREAS, low-income Texans are often the most vulnerable in our communities, including veterans, the elderly, persons with disabilities and mental health needs, and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking; and for many disadvantaged Texans access to legal help might be all that stands between them and homelessness, health, safety, and income to provide food on their table and shelter for their children; and

WHEREAS, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the essential legal needs of Texans have exponentially grown with more than three million Texans having applied for jobless assistance since the beginning of the pandemic, and unemployment by a family member having a significant effect on the stability of a family; and

WHEREAS, civil legal aid can help with newly confronted issues, such as eviction/foreclosure, domestic violence (including child and elder abuse), health and public benefits, utility shut-offs, repossessions, and other consumer-related issues; and

WHEREAS, Texas ranks 47th in access to legal aid lawyers, with approximately one legal aid lawyer for every 8,000 Texans who qualify for legal aid services. A lack of adequate funding to meet the legal need results in thousands of Texans being denied critical, life-changing legal representation, which is even more a matter of life, death, health, and safety during the current pandemic.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Judicial Council supports the Supreme Court of Texas' appropriations request for basic civil legal services funding from the Texas Legislature and supports the Texas Access to Justice Commission and Foundation proposals for additional funding for basic civil legal services.



Honorable Nathan L. Hecht
Chair, Texas Judicial Council