

April 30, 2008

Hon. Gibson E. Armstrong  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room 281, Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Armstrong:

I am writing to request an additional \$4 million for the legal aid line item within the Department of Public Welfare's budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, legal aid received \$2.65 million in Commonwealth funds. I support an increase to \$6.65 million. Nearly 100,000 low-income Pennsylvanians were represented last year by the legal aid programs of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. In addition to cases involving domestic violence, child custody disputes and healthcare denials, as examples, there is an increasing need for legal aid representation in mortgage foreclosures and other consumer issues.

Legal aid programs receive funding and support from the federal Legal Services Corporation, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court through its Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA) Board, as well as from foundations, United Ways, local governments, private attorneys, bar associations, law schools and other sources. Due to declining interest rates, IOLTA revenues will be decreasing by several million dollars which means legal aid will not be able to depend on this source of revenue to the degree that it has in the past.

While Commonwealth funding for legal aid has been flat, drifting far below inflation-adjusted levels, the number of people eligible for legal aid has increased by 20%. Pennsylvania is also far behind many of its neighboring states in its financial support of legal aid services.

In light of the above information, I believe a significant increase in legal aid funding is necessary. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

STEWART J. GREENLEAF

SJG:glw