

Missouri Legal Services

Legal aid programs providing free legal help to the low-income and disadvantaged in Missouri



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Rep. Joe Kennedy Calls for \$2.5 Billion Additional Legal Aid Funding to LSC in COVID-19 Relief Funds

WASHINGTON – Rep. Joe Kennedy III (MA-4) called on Congressional leadership yesterday to provide \$2.5 billion funding for Legal Services Corporation (LSC) and civil legal aid organizations in the next COVID-19 emergency funding package.

In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell (KY) and House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi (CA-12), he wrote: “Any additional spending package from Congress must take into account support for legal aid and LSC. Without the assistance of counsel, low income families will continue to suffer long after the immediate health threat from COVID-19 ends. An additional \$2.5 billion will go a long way to helping all Americans in this recovery.”

His letter follows LSC’s analysis, released earlier this week, that it would cost \$2,567,000,000 for its grantees to meet the legal needs of low-income Americans at risk of eviction. LSC estimates that more than 5.13 million U.S. households are currently eligible for LSC-funded legal assistance and at risk of eviction. LSC’s eligibility standard is 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

“These data show that the health and economic crises have expanded the justice gap into a justice canyon — particularly as to housing and evictions,” said LSC President Ronald S. Flagg.

In a recent survey of LSC-funded legal services organizations, 95% of grantees reported that clients have been requesting assistance with evictions, including illegal lockouts, utility shutoffs and foreclosures. The majority of grantees also reported that low-income families are struggling with issues of income maintenance, such as problems with stimulus checks, and unemployment benefits. Other key areas of need are domestic violence, general family law issues and consumer debt.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. The Corporation currently provides funding to 132 independent nonprofit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

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