

June 6, 2024

Ronald Flagg, Esq.
President
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street, NW 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20007-3522

Re: Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request to Congress

Dear Mr. Flagg:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the Legal Services Corporation's upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 budget request to Congress.


HealthBegins is a national mission-driven healthcare consulting firm that helps Medicaid managed care plans, healthcare systems, and community partners to meet growing health care equity and social needs requirements and apply multi-level strategies to drive long-term impact for communities harmed by societal practices. We help clients and partners improve the social drivers of health and equity at all levels: (1) individual social needs, such as food insecurity; (2) community-level social determinants of health, such as food deserts, and (3) deeper structural determinants of health equity, such as redlining and structural racism. We work with leaders across sectors to translate this understanding into action with clear strategies, learning collaboratives, and improvement campaigns, as well as place-based investment portfolios. Our clients and partners include the American Medical Association, Kaiser Permanente, America's Physician Groups, and CMS Accountable Health Communities Model.

Our leadership team has deep expertise working with the legal aid community through medical-legal partnership. Dr. Rishi Manchanda, CEO, founded and led three MLP programs in the Los Angeles area, partnering with Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County and Inner City Law Center. Dr. Manchanda has spoken and written widely about the critical importance of MLP services to support the health of low-income patients. Ellen Lawton, Senior Fellow, was a co-founder of the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership at George Washington University (NCMLP), is a national expert on MLP implementation and financing, and co-edited the leading textbook on medical-legal partnership.

Healthcare system-based interventions focused on addressing patients' social needs have proliferated in the past decade. But long before the current trend, medical-legal partnerships (MLPs)--which partner legal aid and healthcare teams to identify and remedy health-harming legal needs of low-income and marginalized client populations--began taking root in the early 1990s. According to the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership at



680 East Colorado Boulevard, Suite 180,
Pasadena, CA 91101
healthbegins.org
617-549-1733



George Washington University, MLPs are now active in 175 hospitals and health systems, 163 community health centers, 29 VA medical centers and 83 other health care sites in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Over 170 legal aid agencies participate in MLPs. It is well-documented in both health and legal literature that meaningful access to legal advice and representation helps tenants maintain safe, stable housing and avoid homelessness.

Since 2020, our team has collaborated with NCMLP to develop a national training and technical assistance strategy to support MLP growth. In 2021 Kaiser Permanente (KP) launched the Health, Housing & Justice (HHJ) Initiative to embed MLPs within five medical centers across four states. KP awarded NCMLP over \$4 million over 2 years to support the capacity of five LSC funded programs to collaborate with Kaiser Permanente healthcare teams with a focus on housing stability, and to support robust training and technical assistance from NCMLP and HealthBegins.

Kaiser Permanente also made a significant and unprecedented investment in both implementation and outcomes evaluations to document impact and scaling opportunity. The implementation evaluation, conducted by Kaiser Permanente Center for Community Health & Evaluation released its final report in January 2024; the outcomes evaluation, conducted Partners in Evaluation & Research, is on-going through December 2024. An executive summary of the findings to date are included , and highlight the significant impact that upstream access to legal aid has on patient health and social outcomes, healthcare teams, and legal aid capacity and reach.

Kaiser Permanente, as the largest private integrated health system in the United States, has a singular leadership role in the healthcare sector, and thus their unprecedented investment in building capacity in the legal aid sector will reverberate across the healthcare landscape. Most importantly, the preliminary findings of this multi-state evaluation of MLP reveals positive impacts of legal aid access on patients' housing stability as well as physical and mental health.

As healthcare organizations continue to discover the unique and important role of legal aid in promoting health and well-being in communities across the United States, increased public investment in the Legal Services Corporation is essential. The legal aid sector requires substantial on-going investment in order to both meet the increased demands, and leverage the significant opportunities for cross-sector financing that are rapidly emerging. We stand ready to provide any expertise and insight that LSC may need to ensure that all stakeholders clearly understand the importance of this investment from the perspective of the health and public health sectors.

Sincerely,

Ellen Lawton JD
Senior Fellow
HealthBegins

