



Washington State Senate

February 2, 2015

Dear Senators Nelson, Hargrove, and Ranker,

Fairness and justice have long served as guideposts for the Senate Democratic Caucus in establishing and working to achieve our policy and budget priorities. Never have these concepts been more important as we work to achieve a FY 2015-17 budget that meets constitutional and legal responsibilities while, at the same time, ensures fair treatment of our most vulnerable and promotes opportunity, fairness and justice for all.

As part of our effort to promote these core values, the undersigned Senators respectfully request that Senate Democrats include among their budget priorities full funding of the budget request submitted by the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA).

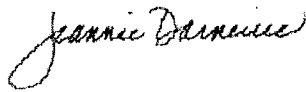
Ours is a society grounded in a commitment to the rule of law. We trust that those whose activities are regulated by properly enacted laws understand their responsibilities and will conform their conduct accordingly. Similarly, we trust that those who are protected by the law will know of and have a meaningful opportunity to assert and defend their rights.

For the vast majority of low income Washingtonians, these basic conditions do not exist. Many do not know of their basic legal rights under the laws we enact. Of those who do, the vast majority cannot get the legal help they need to assert or effectively defend against conduct that violates these rights.

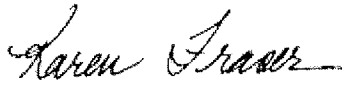
Like so many other core functions of our government, the state-funded civil legal aid system is stretched to the limit. It is nearing the point of functional irrelevancy to the \$1.25 million low income Washingtonians who look to legal aid to help them defend their homes from foreclosure or eviction; their rights to live free from domestic violence; their rights in the workplace (including their rights to apply for and secure employment free from discrimination); their rights to be free from predatory lending and illegal collection practices; and their rights to veterans' benefits, health care, nutritional assistance, mental health treatment, vocational assistance and other critical and necessary supports to which they have claims of legal right.

The Office of Civil Legal Aid has submitted a "live to serve another day" budget request of \$3.6 million designed to stabilize a system that operates far below critical mass or demonstrated need. We have a duty to support it.

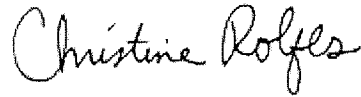
Sincerely,



Jeannie Darneille
27th Legislative District



Karen Fraser
22nd Legislative District



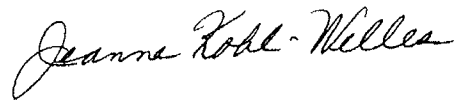
Christine Rolfes
23rd Legislative District



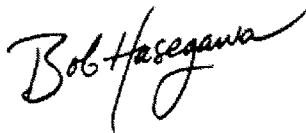
Steve Conway
29th Legislative District



Andy Billig
3rd Legislative District



Jeanne Kohl-Welles
36th Legislative District



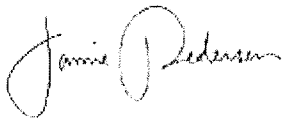
Bob Hasegawa
11th Legislative District



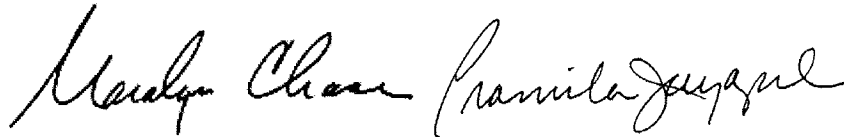
Brian Hatfield
19th Legislative District



David Frockt
46th Legislative District



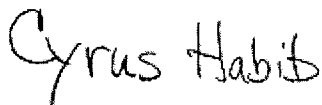
Jamie Pedersen
43rd Legislative District



Maralyn Chase
32nd Legislative District



Pramila Jayapal
37th Legislative District



Cyrus Habib
48th Legislative District