



RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 2015 CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS STUDY UPDATE AND THE NEED TO TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS DOCUMENTED IN THE STUDY

Adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015

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THE ALLIANCE
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WHEREAS, equal justice for all is a fundamental and essential right in our society; and

WHEREAS, more families and individuals in Washington live in poverty than ever before and are turning to Washington's safety net for help; and

WHEREAS, civil legal aid is indispensable and necessary to address critical survival needs such as employment and income, housing, healthcare, education, and family safety; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Supreme Court appointed a Civil Legal Needs Study Update Committee to conduct a fresh assessment of the number and type of civil legal problems experienced by low-income families, that the Update Committee engaged Washington State University's Social and Economic Science Research Center to conduct the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update, and that the SESRC technical reports and the final 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update document that the effect of the legal problems experienced by low-income Washingtonians is even more acute than it was a decade ago, with a tripling in the average number of civil legal problems per low-income household during that time; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update found that certain low-income people who identify as Native American and African American, survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, young people, and veterans experience disproportionately higher rates of civil legal problems than the low-income population as a whole; and

WHEREAS, of those low-income households that experience a civil legal problem, more than three quarters face their problems without any legal help; and

WHEREAS, over 60% of low-income households do not have confidence that the courts or the civil justice system can help people like them solve important problems or protect their civil legal rights; and

WHEREAS, more than 60% of households that receive legal help achieve some resolution of their civil legal problems;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED:

That the Washington Supreme Court's Access to Justice Board reaffirms its commitment to expand access to the justice system and the ability for all Washingtonians to achieve just outcomes to important legal problems, and that it will utilize the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update as a tool to promote the gravity of the problems faced by low income Washingtonians, the importance of civil legal aid to help solve these problems, facilitate collaboration within the legal aid community and the broader Alliance for Equal Justice around the coordinated delivery of legal aid services, and advocate for essential public and private funding for civil legal aid services.