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COLLEEN FOLEY
Executive Director

July 21 2021

Alderman Nik Kovac
Milwaukee Common Council, District 3
City Hall Room 205
200 E Wells St
Milwaukee, WI 53207

Honorable Alderman Kovac:

The Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee urges the Common Council to reschedule and adopt Council File Number 210547 (Mayor Tom Barrett's first allocation of American Rescue Plan funding) **before** the August 2021 recess. The stability of Milwaukee families and entire neighborhoods is at stake and swift and immediate action is needed **now**.

The CDC eviction moratorium ends in just 10 days on July 31, 2021. Last summer provided a sobering snapshot of what to expect when there are no protections in place. Between June 1, 2020 and September 3, 2020, 3,808 evictions were filed in Milwaukee County Circuit Court. Legal Aid saw a corresponding uptick in requests for service -- from 50 weekly to 50 daily with a corresponding tripling of attorney caseloads. (Legal Aid's clients are disproportionately female (77%) and African American (65%) with an average, annual household income of \$15,305.) The steady drumbeat of evictions continue despite the moratorium's September 4, 2020 enactment: 5,904 evictions were filed from September 5, 2020 to July 16, 2021. Community Advocates continues to field 500 weekly inquiries for eviction prevention funding. Our eviction representation continues to mount with 1,289 households served in 2020 and 813 to date for 2021.

Given these grim numbers, Legal Aid consulted with its Cleveland counterpart concerning its public/private Right-to-Counsel (RTC) partnership with its United Way. That model served as a blueprint for Milwaukee between Legal Aid and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County. RTC's overarching goal is to stabilize housing and alter an eviction culture that displaces individuals and families from their homes and neighborhoods to their lifelong detriment. The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors recognized the looming eviction crisis and the impactful nature of RTC in a system where 3% of tenants are represented. It approved RTC funding on June 24, 2021, with a bill signing this past Monday, July 19, 2021.

A delay in additional funding by the Common Council significantly curtails the scope of RTC just as the CDC moratorium sunsets. It limits RTC's reach from all income-eligible households at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines to only those with minor children. Uncertain funding and eligibility sows confusion just as at-risk households scramble for help.

Time is of the essence. I urge you to reschedule and adopt Council File Number 210547 before the August 2021 recess. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Foley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Colleen Foley, Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee