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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

February 26, 2010

To: Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Robert Madore, Director
Beverley Brakeman, Community Action Program Representative

Re: HB 5148 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE JUDICIAL BRANCH.

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and Members of the committee.

My name is Beverley Brakeman and I am here on behalf of our Director Bob Madore.

We are here to urge you to put the existing legal aid funding allocated by the legislature in the Judicial Branch into a separate line outside of Other Expenses (OE) so that the funds are clearly designated for the needs of the poor.

UAW Local 2320 National Organization of Legal Service Workers (NOLSW) represents members who work at CT Legal Services. UAW Local 2320 is a nationwide union representing several thousand legal service attorneys throughout the country. Unfortunately, it is not just in CT that our attorneys and their programs are struggling to stay open and meet the increasing demands of their clients and communities.

Cuts to the Judicial Branch budget proposed by Governor Rell threaten \$1.5 million in legal aid funding. These severe cuts for the Judicial Branch have resulted in zero funds available to pay any of the legislature's \$1.5 million budget line to fund legal aid. This is a direct result of the cuts to the Judicial Branch "other expense" line item.

The clients served by legal aid attorneys in CT cannot have access to justice without adequate funding for legal aid. The services provided by our members are invaluable to their clients and to our state as a whole. Without this legal representation, low income people in need of civil legal services will be left homeless, in domestic violence situations with no recourse, representing themselves in an already clogged court system and much worse.

These attorneys are gems and the money this state provides them is a drop in the bucket of what they and their clients deserve. These attorneys have already made enormous sacrifices – we must secure their funding so they can continue to do their amazing work.

Please preserve the existing legal aid funding line, and fund the Judicial Branch adequately so that it can pass through the legal aid share of the funding as directed in the state budget.

Thank you.

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