JULIE KUSHNER
DIRECTOR
REGION 9A UAW
111 SOUTH ROAD
FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06032-2560
PHONE: (860) 674-0143
FAX: (860) 674-1164
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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

DENNIS WILLIAMS, President 65 GARY CASTEEL, Secretary-Treasurer

Public Hearing Testimony
Judiciary Committee
United Auto Workers Region 9A
Julie Kushner, Director/Beverley Brakeman, Political Representative
SB 428 AAC Funding for Legal Aid to the Poor

Good afternoon. My name is Beverley Brakeman. I am the Political Director of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 9A. I am here today on behalf of our Director Julie Kushner and our members from UAW National Organization of Legal Service Workers Local 2320 – a national amalgamated local union of legal services attorneys and staff.

In Connecticut, we represent attorneys and staff at several programs, the largest of which is CT Legal Services. Our members provide critical services to low income residents dealing with domestic violence, homelessness, and lack of access to disability benefits, Medicaid and other safety net services.

We are here today to urge your support of SB428. As you know, this bill increases court filing fees for the first time since 2012 by 3.5% (about $5 to $10) and gives the Judicial Branch the authority to designate Client Security Fund revenues, when available, to fund legal services to the poor.

In 2012, thanks to this committee and the General Assembly, a similar bill raising court filing fees to support legal aid programs and services and stabilize legal aid after IOLTA plummeted from $20 million to $2 million was passed.

While these court fees have helped significantly, continued declines in revenue have forced legal aid programs to shrink even more - around 20% - causing a sharp reduction in urgently needed services. Despite staff layoffs, restructuring of advocacy efforts, unpaid furlough days, attrition and constant fundraising efforts, legal aid programs continue to face projected budget deficits that could result in further cutbacks next year.

By 2017, without some improvement in revenue, these programs project over $2 million in deficit, which would force more layoffs of approximately 20 legal aid attorneys. In turn, it is estimated that almost 2,000 clients each year would go without legal aid services.

This is a crisis that has not gone away despite all of our efforts and people are suffering and struggling. This bill will help stem the tide of diminished resources and funding. Please vote yes to pass this important bill.

Thank you.

BB/cg
opeiu494