



**Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT 06105-6004

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 428
An Act Concerning Funding of Legal Services for the Poor
Submitted by, Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate
Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ
March 18, 2016**

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee;

I am Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ and I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 428: An Act Concerning Funding of Legal Services for the Poor which would increase funding for the purpose of funding the delivery of legal services to the poor.

I am writing on behalf of the 235 congregations and more than 67,500 people in our state's churches. In fact, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is the largest Protestant denomination in Connecticut. Nationally, the UCC has more than 5,700 congregations with nearly 1 million members. The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ is in support of Economic Justice for all and funding of legal services for the poor helps foster Economic Justice. Also, in 1999, assembled delegates and ministers of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ met and voted on a Resolution which encourages local churches to focus attention on issues of poverty and wealth in these times by exploring Biblical teaching regarding our responsibility to the poor and the responsible acquisition of wealth.

The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ supports the urgent need for Legal Aid funding. Legal aid lawyers help over 10,000 low-income households each year. Legal aid lawyers help children with learning challenges stay in school, with the support services they need. Legal aid lawyers help protect women from violence and abuse, assist people in obtaining and keeping safe, affordable housing, and help families get basic health care.

Legal Aid funding is in crisis. The court filing fees have helped significantly since IOLTA (Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts) decreased from \$20 million in 2007 to around \$2 million per year now, but by 2017 without some improvement in revenue, approximately 20 legal aid attorneys and almost 2,000 clients each year would go without service.¹

We support Senate Bill 428, which calls for small increases (mostly \$5 to \$10) to a set of court fees that have not been adjusted since 2012 and giving the Judicial Branch authority to designate Client Security Fund Revenues, when available, to fund legal services to the poor.

Connecticut's poor people need and deserve access to legal aid. This is an issue of social and economic justice. We therefore urge the Committee to Support Senate Bill 428 which if adopted would address needed Legal Aid funding for low-income residents. Thank you for all your work and for the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of Senate Bill 428.

Many blessings,
Michele Mudrick
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¹ Connecticut Legal Services



God is still speaking,

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