

Access to Justice Commission
c/o Hawaii State Bar Association
1132 Bishop Street, Suite 906
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

February 10, 2009

Attn: Senate Committee on Ways & Means; House Committee on Finance
Informational Hearing Date: Friday, February 13, 2009
Time: 9:00 a.m.

Grant-in-Aid Applications for 2009

Dear Chair Kim, Chair Oshiro, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means and the House Committee on Finance:

I am writing on behalf of the Access to Justice Commission (the “Commission”), which was created by Rule 21 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Hawaii on May 1, 2008. The Commission was established with the purpose of substantially increasing access to justice in civil legal matters for low- and moderate-income residents of Hawaii (“low income Hawaii residents”), including increasing and stabilizing long-term public and private funding and resources for delivery of civil legal services to low-income Hawaii residents.

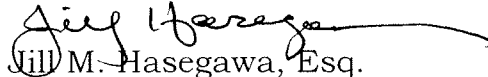
The Commission was created in response to the 2007 Assessment of Civil Legal needs and Barriers of Low- and Moderate-Income People of Hawaii, which found that four out of five low income Hawaii residents do not have their legal needs met and that legal service providers are only able to assist one in three persons who contact them for assistance. With the downturn in the economy, and the recent significant losses of employment, the legal need and number of low income Hawaii residents is rapidly increasing.

Funding for legal service providers is essential to the delivery of legal services to the ever increasing numbers of low income Hawaii residents, and the Commission urges the Hawaii State Legislature and the Executive Branch, to continue at a minimum, the previous levels of legislative funding through grant-in-aid or its equivalent for the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, the Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center (formerly known as Na Loio), Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii, and the Domestic Violence Action Center.

Attached is a copy of “Resolution of Support by the Hawaii Access to Justice Commission for Continued State Funding for the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center (Formerly Known as Na Loio), and Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii, Among Others”, which was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on January 26, 2009. I am also attaching a copy of Rule 21 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Hawaii, which established the Commission and set up the Commission’s mission and composition, and a

copy of the Commission's membership.

On behalf of the Commission, I urge you to continue providing much needed funding to our legal services providers, in the form of grant-in-aids, or their equivalent.


Jill M. Hasegawa, Esq.
Vice-Chair
Access to Justice Commission

Enclosure(s)