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Nancy A. Lopez

August 3, 2021

Mr. Ronald S. Flagg
President
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20007-3522

Re: TIG21-DC-CIR Letter of Commitment

Dear Mr. Flagg and TIG Review Committee:

Washington Council of Lawyers writes to express our support for the Neighborhood Legal Services Program's TIG application for funding for a Coordinated Intake and Referral system for the District of Columbia.

Washington Council of Lawyers is the Public-Interest Bar Association for the District of Columbia. Since 1971, we have worked to ensure that our legal system treats everyone fairly, regardless of money, position, or power. Our members represent the District's diverse legal community: they come from law firms, law schools, private and nonprofit organizations, and the government. Our mission is to promote pro bono and public-interest law through training, advocacy, mentoring, and building a strong public-interest community.

The need for a Coordinated Intake and Referral system in the District of Columbia is acute, as became even more obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the world shut down, clients and legal services providers scrambled to stay abreast of the operating status and intake systems for the dozens of other legal service providers in DC. A Coordinated Intake and Referral system will make the delivery of legal services less burdensome for potential clients, more efficient for providers, and facilitate the coordination of information and legal services in DC.

Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP), with the support and assistance of the D.C. Bar Foundation (DCBF), is a natural fit to lead this project. To be sure, creating a Coordinated Intake and Referral system is an enormous challenge. A project of this scope and size can only be executed by organizations -- such as NLSP and DCBF -- that have strong relationships with the legal services and broader public-interest community. The leadership and vision of these organizations will enable the project to move forward to successful implementation.

The goals will be challenging to meet. Developing a Coordinated Intake and Referral system will require an understanding of each legal services provider's way of doing intake, unique criteria for accepting clients, and individualized schedule for accepting cases. The system will need to use effective technology and offer detailed training to ensure it meets its goals. It will be essential to gather stakeholder input to troubleshoot and avoid problems and solicit community input to ensure that the system is user-friendly and accessible. Establishing a process for gathering candid feedback, addressing concerns, and evaluating results will be important keys to success. NLSP and DCBF have strong skills and ample experience in these areas. Washington Council of Lawyers stands ready to support the work of NLSP and DCBF in convening groups to share information and ideas that will be needed to overcome the substantial challenges that establishing a new system will involve.

We are pleased to support NLSP's request to the Legal Services Corporation for TIG funding for a Coordinated Intake and Referral system.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy A. Lopez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy A. Lopez
Executive Director, Washington Council of Lawyers