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LEGAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS IN CENTRAL NEW YORK WILL RECEIVE \$875,000 IN STATE FUNDING

PRESS CONFERENCE MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2021 AT 1 PM, 221 S. WARREN STREET

Syracuse, NY- Thanks to a coalition of Legal Services organizations and New York State Senators and Assembly members across the state, the Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLA), Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (LASMNY), Legal Services of Central New York (LSCNY), and Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County (VLP) will be receiving \$875,000 in funding to help provide civil legal protections for some community members most affected by the pandemic.

New York State Senator Sean Ryan led the effort to amass support for this vital cause. Senator Rachel May, Senator John Mannion, Assemblymember Al Stirpe, Reps, Assemblymember William Magnarelli, and Assemblymember Pamela Hunter (among others from across the state) endorsed this necessary funding.

“The agencies receiving this funding dedicate extraordinary efforts to providing services that help members of our communities overcome unexpected hardships before they lead to long-term financial burdens. The funding will not only benefit the people who are in need of these services; assisting them will in turn help lessen the lasting effects of the pandemic on our local economies,” said Senator Ryan.

The Family Stabilization and Well-Being Project of Central New York will stabilize working families in Central New York by addressing legal matters that affect the essentials of life such as housing, domestic violence, access to food, and healthcare unemployment insurance benefits, family law, and consumer debt matters.

Civil legal services agencies in Central New York express gratitude and emphasized the importance of the critical resources.

“The Hiscock Legal Aid Society is grateful to our legislators who vigorously advocated for this funding to increase the availability of civil legal resources in Central New York,” said Linda Gehron, Esq. Executive Director of HLA. “HLA assists over 5,000 people every year in matters of divorce, domestic violence, child support, child custody and housing in CNY and would be able to assist hundreds more with this funding.”

In 2020, civil legal service organizations closed more than 2,000 domestic violence and domestic violence-related cases. As families have fallen behind in bills, more are calling for assistance with debt and bankruptcy.

"Legal service organizations uplift members of our community. We provide the means for individuals to obtain equal justice and protect most vulnerable populations in our community. We are on the front lines providing legal counsel, advice, and representation to some of those most affected by the pandemic. The resources from this effort are vital to our mission. LASMNY provides legal services over a 13-county area in Central New York, including, for example, helping victims of domestic violence obtain protective, child custody and support orders, and a fair share of marital assets; protecting people's homes from foreclosure and ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the social security benefits they are entitled to. We thank the elected officials from across the State who helped secure these valuable resources," said Paul Lupia, Esq, Executive Director of LASMNY.

With working conditions precarious, and layoffs common, families have called all four organizations for employment discrimination, workplace safety concerns, and unemployment insurance appeals—the civil legal service providers in Central.

"The global pandemic only intensified what those of us who provide free legal services to low-income families and individuals have known all along. Our services are essential to the orderly function of society. This past year, as we have seen more people fall into poverty and the court system struggling to continue its crucial role, anxious Central New Yorkers have been calling our offices with issues affecting their families' stability and well-being. Across the country, the pandemic has drastically increased economic and health disparities, further highlighting the need for civil legal services," Dennis A. Kaufman, Esq, Executive Director, LSCNY.

The pandemic intensified the needs of low-income families, and has sent more people into poverty. Anxious Central New Yorkers have been calling our offices with issues affecting the stability and well-being of their families.

"For so many community members, affording a private attorney is impossible to help them navigate the most difficult times in life is impossible," said Sally Curran, Esq. VLP Executive Director. "Whether it is regarding what to do next after a loved one passes, fighting an eviction to avoid homelessness, filing for custody, or fighting a debt, the legal system is confusing and difficult. Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc. ("VLP") team, which includes over 500 volunteer lawyers and law students, provides critical and urgent legal help to thousands of our community members every year affecting all of these essentials of life. This funding will expand our ability to serve the community in new ways."

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