



MAY 16, 2023 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Commission Statement on D.C. Council’s FY24 Budget

Today the D.C. Council voted for a FY24 budget that restores Access to Justice Initiative funding to FY23 funding levels of \$31.6M. This reverses a \$18.67M or 60% cut that was proposed by the Mayor in March 2023.

We applaud the Chairman and his colleagues for this proposed investment in life-changing civil legal services that are delivered to District residents by local non-profits on issues that matter – safety, health, housing, and economic stability.

We also thank Judiciary Committee Chair Brooke Pinto, Transportation & Environment Committee Chair Charles Allen, and Health Committee Chair Christina Henderson – and their fellow committee members – for the contributions those committees made towards restored funding. Throughout the budget process, all Councilmembers recognized the Initiative as a priority, to which we are profoundly grateful.

Restored funding will:

- **address housing instability among District residents**, with over 50% of Initiative funding supporting eviction-prevention efforts that have been proven to be effective at a time when the current number of evictions, calls for help among tenants, and open cases in court is rising;
- **promote public safety**, with funds supporting programs that offer help to victims of domestic- and gender-based violence and combat recidivism at risk;
- **promote economic stability in the community**, with supported services combatting economic risk and inopportunity, addressing employment-related problems, and helping District residents access vital benefit programs; and
- **uniquely support thousands of vulnerable District residents**, such as children, elders, individuals with disabilities, the immigrant community, and other special populations who are served by Initiative programs targeted at serving their unique needs.

The District government has long recognized the value and impact of civil legal services on the safety, economic stability, and community health of the District community. The Access to Justice Initiative – as strategically administered by the D.C. Bar Foundation – is a lifeline for the thousands of District residents who rely on it for legal help. To learn more about the Initiative’s impact, visit the Commission’s website at www.dcaccesstojustice.org and <https://dcaccesstojustice.org/advocacy/>.

Even with these investments, the Commission recognizes that we face a civil justice crisis in our city where needs consistently eclipse capacity. We must ensure that there is sustained and appropriate funding for the Initiative so that as many residents as possible have the access to civil justice that they deserve in our nation’s capital.

Peter B. Edelman, Chair and James J. Sandman, Vice Chair

Contact: Nancy Drane, Executive Director; nancy.drane@dcaccesstojustice.org