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Title: Request for State Action - Preservation of Funding for Civil Legal Services

FOR the purpose of encouraging the Baltimore City Delegation to the General Assembly to support the preservation of funding for civil legal services.

Sponsors: President Young, Bill Henry, Sharon Green Middleton, Helen L. Holton, Robert Curran, James B. Kraft, Carl Stokes, Edward Reisinger, William "Pete" Welch, Brandon M. Scott, Rochelle Spector, Mary Pat Clarke, Nick Mosby

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Preservation of Funding for Civil Legal Services

FOR the purpose of encouraging the Baltimore City Delegation to the General Assembly to support the preservation of funding for civil legal services.

WHEREAS, access to legal recourse is a bedrock of civil society and American democracy, and access to legal services promotes the efficiency of the judicial system.

WHEREAS, the main source of funding for legal services for low income Maryland residents is the IOLTA Program, which has seen IOLTA income decrease due to protracted near-zero interest rates.

WHEREAS, current IOLTA and filing fee revenue is insufficient to maintain present grant levels going forward.

WHEREAS, repeal of the filing fee surcharge sunset provision is necessary to preserve Maryland's legal services safety net, and additional revenue is necessary to avoid further funding reductions and to provide Maryland's legal services delivery system with a desperately needed stable, predictable, source of revenue from year to year, as well as improve the administration of justice for all Maryland citizens by facilitating improved usage of Maryland's courts.

WHEREAS, the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC), members of the legal services community, and many others concerned with access to justice for low-income Marylanders have identified the continuation of certain filing fee surcharges and the appropriation of additional revenue as a fair and reasonable means by which to address the unprecedented loss of IOLTA funding and the continued significant projected losses in IOLTA revenue.

WHEREAS, without access to legal representation, low income people are deprived of access to legal recourse impacting a myriad of critical human needs including housing, employment, medical care, subsistence benefits, child custody and family matters, reasonable accommodations for disabilities, etc.

WHEREAS, the City Council of Baltimore has been a consistent supporter of access to justice, and has consistently demonstrated its commitment to this mission by its tradition of supporting initiatives that promote access to justice for all citizens and public respect for the rule of law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, that this Body urges the Baltimore City Delegation to the General Assembly to ensure access to justice by supporting efforts to preserve funding for civil legal services through elimination of the 2013 Sunset Provisions of the 2010 Filing Fee Surcharges and through an increase in the MLSC Abandoned Property Fund appropriation.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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