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Betsy Butler

March 1, 2017

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee Five  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2059  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Increase the Equal Access Fund – Support**

Dear Senator Skinner:

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we are writing in strong support of increasing the Equal Access Fund (EAF) in the judicial branch budget. The EAF is a key component for California's legal services providers and support centers. Because legal services providers and support centers allow for free legal assistance to be provided to California's low-income and indigent residents, increased funding for free legal services is more vital now than ever.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. As a support center, we train and educate attorneys on issues directly affecting low-income and indigent women and girls in California. We cannot provide our services without sufficient funding. We urge you to consider an increase of \$30 million to the EAF to make sure that legal services programs and support centers will be able to continue to represent low-income Californians threatened by federal policy changes and funding cuts.

The funding CWLC receives from the EAF allows us to serve California's veteran population by assisting veterans in securing access to benefits, housing and other baseline services. CWLC also trains attorneys who assist veterans throughout the state. Continued funding is necessary to support our veterans and other low-income Californians in desperate need of legal aid services.

California relies on the legal services provided by its invisible safety net of legal nonprofits. Potential upcoming federal budget cuts will decimate this safety net when vulnerable Californians need it most. CWLC depends on the EAF to serve Californians in need.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center respectfully urges you to increase funding to the Equal Access Fund by \$30 million.

Sincerely,

  
Betsy Butler  
Executive Director

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