

COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force
Funding Committee Meeting
August 26, 2020

Co-chair Cathy Blesdoe called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm on Wednesday, August 26, 2020.

Present: Del. Luke Clippinger; Wilhelm Joseph; Pam Ortiz; Matt Hill; Tom Lynch; Jake Whitaker; David Eppler; Sondra McLemore; Tea Carnell; Bob Embry; Vicki Schultz; Susan Erlichman; Del Rosenberg; Bobbie Styer; Cizhu Feng.

1. Co-Chair Bledsoe welcomed committee members and solicited the names of attendees joining by telephone.
2. The minutes of the Committee's August 12, 2020 meeting were adopted as written.
3. Updates:
 - a) Co-chair Erlichman reported that as of last week there had not been a determination on the MLSC proposal for CARES Act Funding. Jake Whitaker reported that he had shared the proposal with the Governor's counsel and legislative office and would keep the Committee updated on any progress.
 - b) David Eppler reported that the Task Force's CARES Act proposal was ready to be circulated to all Task Force members for feedback and believed it would be issued to members today or tomorrow.
 - c) David Eppler reported that the inquiry of the appropriateness of the Task Force issuing a letter to philanthropic foundations regarding funding for civil legal aid was submitted to ethics counsel. It was noted that, depending on the response, a fall-back position could be having the letter sent to the foundations by MLSC.
 - d) David Eppler further reported that the Task Force had reached out to several corporate counsel regarding the Op-Ed piece and hoped for an answer soon.

4. Co-Chair Bledsoe reported that the Task Force Committees had been asked to begin thinking about recommendations to be made for inclusion in the Task Force's final report, noting that sustainable funding for civil legal aid was necessary to avert a significant and ongoing crisis in the state's legal aid delivery system. Committee members suggested several initiatives, including increased pro bono and the enactment of a wealth tax to fund civil legal aid. It was further noted that it would be critical to make the strongest case possible, given the scarcity of resources and competing needs resulting from the pandemic.
5. David Eppler reported that the Task Force's Housing Committee would be hosting a virtual town hall meeting on August 31st and that details regarding the meeting would be circulated to all Task Force members today. Task Force members are requested to share the link to the meeting with their constituent groups.
6. Other Business:
 - a) The Committee's talking points have been finalized and are ready to be distributed to other Task Force Committees.
 - b) Co-Chair Bledsoe thanked the Committee's intern, Cizhu Feng, for volunteering to continue her work with the Committee through year's end.
 - c) Bob Embry indicated that he attended an excellent presentation by the Public Justice Center earlier in the day and asked that the recording of the presentation be made available to Committee and Task Force members.
 - d) In response to a question from co-chair Erlichman, Del. Rosenberg suggested enlisting the business community to advocate for CARES Act funding. A discussion ensued and Committee members shared ideas about outreach to various individuals and groups, including real estate companies, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce as well as local Chambers, the Greater Baltimore Committee, the National Association of Corporate Counsel, and other business entities. It was agreed that members should reach out to contacts wherever possible to garner support.
7. The next meeting of the Funding Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 3:00 pm. Today's meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

