

April 21, 2021

Hon. Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5094  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: Funding for California County Law Libraries

Dear Senator Skinner and Assemblymember Ting:

We write on behalf of the California Lawyers Association (CLA) to ask that you include supplemental funding for California's county law libraries in the upcoming budget.

County law libraries serve an important public service. They provide needed access to legal information for Californians who are without the means to hire a lawyer and would be without help but for their local public law library. Although the exact percentage varies by county and case type, there are situations where over 80% of the litigants do not have counsel in matters such as evictions, foreclosures, child custody and support proceedings, and debt collection cases. Since the onset of COVID-19, Californians are facing additional legal issues. Many lack funds to pay an attorney to help them. The county law libraries do help them – regardless of subject matter, status, or income – and are a vital safety net in the delivery of access to justice. In addition to serving the needs of self-represented litigants, the county law libraries are also used by solo and small firm attorneys, who may have limited resources of their own.

County law libraries derive their revenue almost exclusively from a small percentage of civil court filing fees which, even before COVID-19, had decreased by nearly 40% over the previous decade. Now, due to COVID-19 related court closures and the economic impact of the pandemic on California businesses and individuals, filing fee revenues have fallen an additional 20%. This devastating reduction in revenue is making it extremely difficult to maintain these critical institutions and many county law libraries are on the verge of closure.

Hon. Nancy Skinner  
Hon. Phil Ting  
April 21, 2021  
Page 2

For all of these reasons, we urge you to provide an appropriation in the upcoming fiscal year 2021-22 budget for the county law libraries.

We appreciate your consideration of this budget request.

Sincerely,



Ona Alston Dosunmu  
C.E.O. & Executive Director



Emilio Varanini  
President