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For more information, contact:

Leslie Corbett, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, 312-938-2381, lcorbett@iejf.org
Bob Glaves, The Chicago Bar Foundation, 312-554-1205, bglaves@chicagobar.org
Jonah Kushner, Social IMPACT Research Center, 312-870-4956, JKushner@heartlandalliance.org

Civil Legal Aid Programs Measure Their Impact *Study Shows Economic Benefits of Civil Legal Aid*

(Chicago)... The Chicago Bar Foundation and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation released a report today to inform policymakers and other stakeholders about the tangible economic benefits of legal aid.

The report, *Legal Aid in Illinois: Selected Social and Economic Benefits* by the Social IMPACT Research Center, provides a snapshot of the economic return legal aid providers produce for their low-income clients and other Illinoisans. Using a selection of approximately 8,000 cases closed in 2010 by just seven of 38 legal aid providers in the state, the researchers found that:

- **Legal aid providers won \$49.4 million in monetary awards for low-income clients.** Examples of monetary awards are child support and alimony, public benefits like Social Security and unemployment insurance, and relief from illegal charges by a landlord or payment to a predatory lender.
- **Legal aid providers won \$11.9 million in benefits wholly or partially paid for by the federal government.** It is estimated that these awards were **associated with \$9.3 million in demand for goods and services**, \$5.4 million in household income, and 172 non-legal-aid jobs.
- By preventing or obtaining more time in foreclosures or evictions, obtaining, protecting, or increasing rental subsidies, and assisting clients with other housing issues, **legal aid providers avoided \$1.9 million in costs to homeless shelters.**
- By obtaining protective orders, divorces, child custody, and legal recognition for noncitizens experiencing abuse, **legal aid providers avoided \$9.4 million in costs of domestic violence to individuals.**

Across Illinois, nonprofit legal aid providers offer free or low-cost legal advice, representation and other legal services to low-income disadvantaged Illinoisans who have civil legal problems but cannot afford a lawyer. These legal aid providers afford access to the justice system for clients facing eviction and foreclosure, domestic violence, termination of vital benefits, and other threats to the health and safety of themselves and their families.

“As funders, we see that legal aid is a good investment of government and private dollars, said Karen Hasara, president of the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation. “These data affirm the good that legal aid organizations do for their low-income clients as well as the community at large.”

In addition to the economic benefits highlighted in the study, legal aid helps ensure that low-income, disadvantaged people understand their rights; have the assistance needed to fairly and efficiently resolve their legal problems; and feel they are treated fairly and equally under the laws that govern their particular situations.

Funding for the study was provided by The Chicago Bar Foundation, the Illinois Bar Foundation, the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, the Polk Bros. Foundation and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation.

Legal Aid in Illinois: Selected Social and Economic Benefits can be found at the following sites:
<http://www.heartlandalliance.org/research/projects-publications/legal-aid-in-illinois>;
www.chicagobarfoundation.org; www.equaljusticeillinois.org; and www.iejf.org.

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