



Vermont Bar Association

• *Serving the Public and the Profession*

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To: Nate Biscotti, Committee Assistant

From: Robert M. Paolini, Executive Director, Vermont Bar Association

Re: Vermont Legal Aid Budget Request

Date: February 10, 2026

The Vermont Bar Association Board of Managers recently voted unanimously to support the request of Vermont Legal Aid (VLA) for \$635,620 to restore capacity in its Poverty Law Project after devastating federal funding losses in FY25. Those reductions in funding have cost VLA a loss of 11 staff- 9 attorneys and 2 paralegals.

The Agency of Human Services funds VLA at approximately \$2.6 million per year. But that amount has been the same for three years. With that stagnation plus the funding losses, VLA has been running at a deficit for the past few years. This is happening while the demand for legal services has increased by 104% since 2022.

The VBA Board hopes that this committee will advocate for inclusion in the FY27 budget bill the sum requested by Vermont Legal Aid.

Members of the VBA do volunteer pro bono work, contribute to fundraising campaigns held by the Vermont Bar Foundation, as well as other county-based events to help provide counsel where needed. But nothing can replace the work done by VLA on a statewide basis.

Thank you for your work on this and your willingness to give VLA a speedy hearing this month. I know the staff of VLA can provide further information and figures as you may need, and the VBA will gladly provide anything more that's needed.