



Legislation Text

File #: 22-6039, **Version:** 1

Department: Community Services

Department Head/Elected Official: Dr. Adrienne M. Holloway, Executive Director

Regular or Supplemental RCA: Supplemental RCA

Type of Request: Financial Authorization

Project ID (if applicable): N/A

Vendor/Entity Legal Name (if applicable): N/A

MWDBE Contracted Goal (if applicable): N/A

MWDBE Current Participation (if applicable): N/A

Justification for 0% MWDBE Participation Goal: N/A - Goal not applicable to request

Request Summary (Agenda Caption):

Request by Community Services for approval of \$4,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to provide eviction defense legal services for low-income residents through targeted awards. These funds will support a network of housing legal service providers and non profits to meet increased demand.

Background and Discussion:

As the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States and Harris County are facing an eviction crisis. Eviction filings in Harris County are above the pre-pandemic average: from January through July 2022, landlords filed 121,248 evictions; tenants were represented by an attorney in only 1.96% of those cases. In one week in August 2022 alone, Justice courts scheduled 1,865 eviction hearings. These figures do not include informal evictions, in which families self-evict before receiving a formal notice of a court setting.

In 2021, Harris County established the Housing Legal Services Initiative (“HLSI” or “the Initiative”), in response to an anticipated increase in number of evictions, especially for non-payment of rent due to household financial losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lift of the National Center for Disease and Control (CDC) eviction moratorium, and to maximize the impact of the County’s COVID-19 rental assistance program.

The HLSI makes short-term, non-cash, in-kind emergency disaster relief in the form of consulting, referral, legal, and other related legal services directed to cure legal needs due to COVID-19 for qualifying applicants in Harris County, Texas. The total sum allocated to fund this Program is \$4,000,000. Applicants may apply for funding for an initial period of up two years.

Expected Impact:

This program aims to develop a sustainable infrastructure for court-based advice, counsel, and representation for tenants at imminent risk of eviction. It also aims to reduce increase of homelessness and housing instability

during the COVID-19 public health crisis and recovery by representing tenants with evictions and preserving tenancies. It is expected to increase eviction prevention legal services for low-income renters across the county regardless of their immigration status, and increase knowledge through community education and outreach among Harris County tenants about their legal rights and responsibilities relating to their tenancies, including evictions and living conditions.

Alternative Options:

Not providing eviction defense legal services for low-income residents.

Alignment with Goal(s):

- Justice and Safety
- Economic Opportunity
- Housing
- Public Health
- Transportation
- Flooding
- Environment
- Governance and Customer Service

Prior Court Action (if any):

Date	Agenda Item #	Action Taken
8/24/2021	21-4328	Passed: Commissioners Court approved a one-year agreement between Harris County and Lone Star Legal Aid to administer the Harris County COVID-19 Housing and Legal Services program in support of legal services for renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the amount of \$1,000,000 funded by COVID Response and Recovery Funds

Location:

Address (if applicable):

Precinct(s): Countywide

Fiscal and Personnel Summary			
Service Name	Legal Services		
	SFY 22	FY 23	Next 3 FYs
Incremental Expenditures (do NOT write values in thousands or millions)			
Labor Expenditures	\$	\$	\$
Non-Labor Expenditures	\$	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Total Incremental Expenditures	\$	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Funding Sources (do NOT write values in thousands or millions)			
Existing Budget			

Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$
Total Current Budget	\$	\$	\$
Additional Budget Requested			
2651 - American Rescue Plan 2021	\$	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$
Choose an item.	\$	\$	\$
Total Additional Budget Requested	\$	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Total Funding Sources	\$	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Personnel (Fill out section only if requesting new PCNs)			
Current Position Count for Service	0	0	0
Additional Positions Requested	0	0	0
Total Personnel	0	0	0

Anticipated Court Date: September 27, 2022

Anticipated Implementation Date (if different from Court date): N/A

Emergency/Disaster Recovery Note: COVID-19 related item

Contact(s) name, title, department: Dr. Adrienne M. Holloway, Executive Director, CSD

Attachments (if applicable): Scope of Work