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North Carolina Legal Services Providers Generate \$48 Million in Economic Impact

RALEIGH, North Carolina--A recently released report finds the work of legal services providers across the state generated \$48,775,276 in economic impact in 2012.

Commissioned by the NC Equal Access to Justice Commission, the report, "A 108% Return on Investment: The Economic Impact to the State of North Carolina of Civil Legal Services in 2012," details the direct economic benefit, indirect economic impact, and cost savings attributed to the work of three North Carolina legal services providers, Legal Aid of North Carolina, Legal Services of Southern Piedmont, and Pisgah Legal Services.

These three organizations provide civil legal assistance to low-income North Carolinians to ensure access to the civil justice system for all, regardless of ability to pay. "While resources to support legal services have decreased, the need for legal assistance is greater than ever," said George Hausen, executive director of Legal Aid of North Carolina, "and our goal is to ensure the basic needs of people are met, including access to food, shelter, safety, and healthcare."

Analyzing data from the three providers to measure the economic impact of their work, the study finds that legal representation helped North Carolinians gain access to \$9.2 million dollars in new federal benefits, including food stamps, SSI, disability, and federal tax refunds, as well as an additional \$8.8 million in child support payments and housing awards. The indirect impact, including increases in employment, wages, and business outputs within the state and local economies due to the new spending, totals nearly \$13.9 million. Further, domestic violence, eviction, and foreclosure prevention generate cost savings for the state of \$16.8 million.

The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission was established in November 2005 by order of the North Carolina Supreme Court and is chaired by Chief Justice Sarah Parker. The mission of the Commission is to expand access to civil legal representation for people of low income and modest means across North Carolina.

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