



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0769-1999, **Version:** *

Res. No. 769

Resolution calling upon the State Legislature to adopt A.6887 to create an Access to Justice Fund, a \$40 million permanent funding stream from the Abandoned Property Fund for civil legal services programs throughout New York State.

By Council Members DiBrienza and Linares

Whereas, New York State Assembly Member Helene Weinstein has introduced the Access to Justice Fund bill, A.6887, an act which would establish a permanent funding stream for civil legal services programs; and

Whereas, Legal services programs provide free civil legal representation to low income New Yorkers in housing, elder law, domestic violence, family law, unemployment, disability, Social Security, and other government benefits cases, providing access to justice for New York's poorest residents; and

Whereas, In recent years, civil legal services providers have suffered devastating losses of federal and state funding, as well as a greater than 50% decline in Interest on Lawyer Accounts "IOLA" funding since 1992 due to lower interest rates; and

Whereas, In the early 1990's civil legal services providers were meeting only approximately 14% of legal assistance needs even before the most recent declines in funding, which have resulted in office closings, staff layoffs, unfilled positions, and a reduction in intake; and

Whereas, Thousands of New York's elders, disabled persons, children, victims of domestic violence, and families facing eviction no longer have the vital representation needed to secure the basic necessities of life; and

Whereas, Legal assistance saves money by reducing State and local government benefits, such as saving shelter costs by preventing evictions, foster care costs by keeping families together, and public assistance costs by securing federal disability benefits; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the State Legislature to adopt A.6887 to create an Access to Justice Fund, a \$40 million permanent funding stream from the Abandoned Property Fund for civil legal services programs throughout New York State.

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