

# **Economic Impact of Civil Legal Assistance Organizations in Tennessee**

*Civil Justice for Low-Income People Produces Ripple Effects that Benefit Every Segment of the Community*

## **Access to Justice Boosts the State's Economy**

Each year, thousands of Tennesseans benefit from legal help provided by a small group of lawyers and staff from non-profit civil legal aid organizations. Though these providers represent only a small fraction of all Tennessee lawyers, their impact is significant.

Civil legal assistance programs in Tennessee work directly with low-income and vulnerable populations, but investing in these programs provide benefits to more than just the direct client population. Every dollar invested in civil legal services in Tennessee produces financial impacts worth many times the initial expense. The benefits extend to businesses, local governments and individuals across all social classes.

## **TN's civil legal aid providers generated over \$188 million in economic impacts in 2013:**

- Obtained over \$64 million in direct financial benefits for Tennessee residents
- Saved \$42.6 million in community expenditures in the areas of emergency shelter, foreclosure and domestic violence
- Provided over \$81 million in unique economic benefits for local communities across the state from federal dollars and the resulting economic multiplier effect

## **Quantifiable Outcomes: Over \$11 in Economic Impacts for Every \$1 of Funding**

Tennessee's legal aid organizations produce over \$11.20 in economic impact for every dollar of funding they receive. While it is difficult to place a dollar amount on many of the societal benefits that civil legal services programs produce, these organizations also achieve financial outcomes that are readily quantifiable and noteworthy, both to individual clients and to the community.

### **OTHER KEY FINDINGS IN TENNESSEE:**

- Legal aid reduces burdens on state budgets and local communities
- Investments in legal aid produce positive economic effects for residents of all income levels
- Positive economic impact includes both immediate and long-term benefits
- Increasing funding and support for civil legal services should create additional benefits

## **Beyond Financial Impacts: Recognizing Other Significant Benefits from Legal Aid**

The financial aspects of civil legal aid, while very significant, tell only part of the story. For many low-income and vulnerable Tennesseans, even more significant benefits come from non-monetary outcomes they achieve with the help of civil legal services organizations. For these individual clients and their families, it is impossible to calculate the uplifted lives, renewed hope and strengthened communities that result from meaningful access to justice, regardless of income or circumstance.

---

This study was prepared for the *Tennessee Bar Association's Access to Justice Committee* and the *Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Initiative* in March 2015. Michigan-based research firm *The Resource for Great Programs* calculated the economic impact of nine of Tennessee's civil legal aid organizations, including regional and statewide programs, and compared these impacts to the programs' funding to quantify the study results.

**More information about this study is available at: <http://www.tba.org/node/74087>**