



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-175

For business meeting on November 15, 2024

Title

Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Recommended by

Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness

Hon. Kevin C. Brazile, Cochair

Hon. Victor A. Rodriguez, Cochair

Report Type

Action Required

Effective Date

November 15, 2024

Date of Report

October 16, 2024

Contact

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Executive Summary

The Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness recommends approval of a distribution of \$250,000 to the California Access to Justice Commission for administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for service providers employed by qualified legal service projects and support centers. The Judicial Council has been directed by Senate Bill 133 (Stats. 2023, ch. 34) to take this ongoing action since fiscal year 2023–24.

Recommendation

The Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness recommends that the Judicial Council, effective November 15, 2024, approve a distribution of \$250,000 to the California Access to Justice Commission for administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program, as authorized by Senate Bill 133 (Stats. 2023, ch. 34).

Relevant Previous Council Action

In 2023 and ongoing, the Legislature appropriated \$250,000 to the Judicial Council to provide funding to the California Access to Justice Commission (Commission) to administer a tax-advantaged study loan repayment assistance program for service providers employed by

qualified legal service projects and support centers. On September 19, 2023, the Judicial Council approved the distribution of \$250,000 of Equal Access Funds to the Commission for that purpose (Link A).

Analysis/Rationale

The Commission is an independent nonprofit agency. Beginning in fiscal year 2023–24, SB 133 directed the Judicial Council to annually distribute \$250,000 of Equal Access Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission for administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for purposes of recruiting and retaining staff attorneys (Link B). The Commission reports to Judicial Council staff on the administration of the program each year.

Policy implications

This recommendation helps implement Goal I of the Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch—Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion. By working with justice system partners, these funds will aid the recruitment and retention of qualified legal aid attorneys and help achieve greater diversity in the legal profession.

Comments

Public comments were not solicited for this proposal because the recommendations are within the Judicial Council’s purview to approve without circulation.

Alternatives considered

There is no alternative to distributing the funds in accordance with SB 133.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

The funds for the California Access to Justice Commission require no court implementation because all funds will be used to administer the loan repayment assistance program. Council staff will develop a contract between the Judicial Council and the California Access to Justice Commission, setting out reporting requirements and responsibilities to comply with the terms of SB 133. The recommendations in this report will have no direct fiscal effect on the courts.

Attachments and Links

1. Link A: Sen. Bill 133 (Stats. 2023, ch. 34),
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB133
2. Link B: Judicial Council report, Aug. 11, 2023, *Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission*,
<https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12245978&GUID=38448FB7-D433-4E1B-80E1-BA6DF4AA820E>