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March 28, 2016

Wisconsin Supreme Court
Attn: Clerk of Supreme Court
110 East Main Street, Suite 215
PO Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

RE: Rules Petition 15-05 Comments

Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court:

I write to you in support of the petition of the State Bar to amend the rules noted above. The ELCA Outreach Center started a Free Legal Advice Service in September of 2011 to address the basic legal questions of citizens living in poverty in Kenosha Wisconsin. The issues which were initially addressed were debt, family, guardianship and rent. Recently, the free service has expanded to address child support, immigration and drivers license issues. In less than five years, almost 600 individuals have been assisted by this free legal advice service. The Outreach Worker coordinates all the appointments with the nine volunteer attorneys. Appointments are generally on two Friday afternoons each month for 20 minutes.

Currently, the demand for this service is higher than the supply of appointments. This is due to not having enough attorneys to provide the pro bono advice. The ELCA Outreach Center has solicited for additional attorneys, but have not been able to gain any new ones. The fear is that we will burn out the few attorneys that we have.

By passing Rules Petition 15-05, the Outreach Center will be able to offer CLE hours to attorneys for time helping those who live in poverty with their legal issues. The Outreach Center would like to have 14-15 attorneys spending two hours each quarter at the free legal advice service. This would enable the Center to offer the service each week and would only require attorneys to spend two hours a quarter providing the pro bono service. The demand from our clients is such that with the proper amount of attorneys available, the free legal advice service could offer weekly appointments. This would go along way to helping many more citizens of the Kenosha area who are living in poverty help with their legal issues.

Granting CLE hours for pro bono representation is appropriate as the attorneys gain insights and experiences from the clients that they would not have normally experienced. This will also help those living in poverty gain the answers to their legal issues.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Karl Erickson
Executive Director
ELCA Outreach Center

The mission of the ELCA Outreach Center is to share God's love by addressing the needs of children, youth and adults through programs and services that encourage them to become self-sufficient, caring and participating members of the community.