

Legal Aid Services of Oregon

Central Administrative
Office

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March 30, 2012

Mattie Cohan, Senior Assistant General Counsel
Office of Legal Affairs
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street NW
Washington DC 20007

Dear Ms. Cohan:

On behalf of Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO), we submit the following comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking related to amendments of the LSC regulations on termination procedures, enforcement, and suspension procedures.

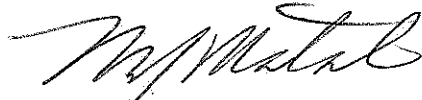
One of our primary concerns is the harm that will result to clients and applicants under a regulatory system that allows for more frequent reductions in funding to legal services programs. The Supplementary Information section of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking states that the “option to impose a reduction in funding of less than five percent would also reduce the risk that a recipient’s client services or ability to implement corrective action would suffer due to a significant lack of resources.” We disagree with this assessment. Based on the current appropriation for LASO, a funding reduction of 5% would equal \$178,000; a 4% reduction would result in a loss of \$142,000. These amounts are not insignificant, particularly in the current economic climate. LASO recently reduced its number of employees and closed a branch office, events occurring in programs throughout the country. As is true with many programs, we have little in the way of a “funding cushion” that would enable us to maintain our current service delivery level if our funding were reduced by these amounts. A system that allows for more funding reductions than provided under the current regulations will adversely impact existing client service.

We also have concerns about the procedures and standards that would be applied when there are limited reductions of funding. The timelines and the opportunities to have only an informal meeting or to submit written materials are inadequate procedural safeguards in light of the possible loss involved. We are also very concerned about the lack of standards for implementing the sanctions. As we read the proposal, the definition of “substantial violation” appears to set forth factors, rather than clearly defined standards. Again, in light of the possible loss involved, we feel that there should be clear standards before these additional sanctions could be imposed.

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Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Matsuda', written in a cursive style.

Thomas J Matsuda
Executive Director until 3/31/12

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janice R. Morgan', written in a cursive style.

Janice Morgan
Executive Director as of 4/1/12