



CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER OF MINNESOTA

HF 2251

Grant funding to provide legal representation for children in need of protection or services (CHIPS) and children in out-of-home placement.

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC), is a non-profit agency providing direct legal representation to child protection children and youth who in accordance with Minn. Stat. §260C.163 entitled to an attorney.

CLC administers a volunteer attorney program and works with a roster of 340+ volunteer attorneys to service its child clients. CLC staff is responsible for recruiting, training, and supervising volunteer attorneys to ensure our clients receive high-quality representation. In addition, due to complexity or imminent resolution of some cases, CLC staff handles approximately 30% of all cases internally.

Currently, CLC is court appointed to represent all children and youth ages 10-21 who are CHIPS in an out-of-home placement or are state wards in Ramsey County; and all state wards ages 10-21 in Hennepin County. CLC does not terminate its services to children and youth after parents' parental right are terminated and continues to represent its clients through the resolution of the matter either by adoption or aging out of the system. Thus, the overall representation to its clients may be for up to 11 years.

CLC's volunteer attorney program provides pro bono and staff services in the estimated about of \$3.5M to \$4M annually. However, CLC's organizational budget is only \$1M.

Approximately 65% of CLC's funding comes from private philanthropy, which is inconsistent and unpredictable. **CLC is urgently seeking an increase in state funding by \$150,000 annually**, in order to sustain its capacity to recruit, train, and supervise its pro bono volunteer attorneys.

CLC has been providing these services for almost 30 years and is highly experienced in this area. Our approach is to provide holistic representation to our clients and remove all obstacle to ensure their successful transition to adulthood. One example is CLC's clients graduate from high school at a rate of 75%, whereas nationally, children and youth who grow up in foster care only graduate at a rate of 30-40%. CLC also ensures that at the time youth exists care, they have at least one stable adult in their live to guide them through their next chapter. 84% of CLC's clients are children of color, and they need to have their voices heard and have an attorney by their side, just as they county and their parents do.

Because the smallest voice in the courtroom should be the loudest!