

**RESOLUTION**

**ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Supervisor Kathy Schulz and  
Supervisor Shirley Williams  
INITIATED BY



11/29/2021  
DATE DRAFTED

**Resolution Allocating American Rescue Plan Act Funding to Provide for Tenant Legal Aid**

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on some individuals and families, including through job loss, and has exacerbated the difficulties of certain low-income individuals who were already facing economic challenges; and,

WHEREAS, eviction moratoria and other measures to keep household utilities operating that were put in place during the pandemic and were successful in keeping many individuals and families safely in their homes, but the eviction moratorium issued by the Centers for Disease Control has now lapsed and evictions are proceeding; and,

WHEREAS, many individuals and families have months' worth of back-rent due without the ability to pay, which will likely lead to the commencement of eviction proceedings; and,

WHEREAS, many landlords have not received rent payments while eviction moratoria have been in place, creating hardships for these business owners, who will legally be entitled to seek such past-due and future rent from tenants; and,

WHEREAS, statistics indicate that low-income and otherwise disadvantaged populations, who are more likely to face eviction, have also been less likely to have received a COVID-19 vaccine, creating a situation in which evictions may displace individuals into shared housing, shelters, or homelessness and thereby increase the likelihood of spreading COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided funding that can be utilized to address housing-related emergencies created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and,

WHEREAS, while several community agencies may have sufficient funding currently from ARPA, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and/or other sources for eviction and utility aid, there may be a longer term need to address these issues with ARPA funding if currently available funds run out; and,

WHEREAS, a current gap in the system in Rock County is sufficient legal resources to assist those who may lack the legal background or have insufficient resources to navigate the court eviction process; and,

WHEREAS, tenants, in particular, lack the resources necessary for representation in an eviction proceeding in court, putting them at a disadvantage; and,

WHEREAS, Legal Action of Wisconsin provides free legal aid to low-income people, including eviction and other housing law matters; and,

WHEREAS, Everyone Cooperating to Help Others (ECHO) has expressed interest in providing an in-kind donation of office space to support staff from Legal Action who can operate this program; and,

WHEREAS, there is a need for a long-term strategy to provide a landlord-tenant mediation program, and to address homelessness, transitional housing, and affordable housing, all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that will require future efforts of the County Board and that will be coming forward in subsequent resolution(s).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this 16th day of December, 2021, does hereby approve that the County contract with Legal Action of Wisconsin to provide free legal aid to low-income renters facing eviction and other housing insecurity issues to help navigate legal barriers to securing and maintaining safe and affordable housing. The

contract may be for years 2022, 2023, and 2024, and shall be funded by ARPA monies already allocated in the 2022 budget and that the County Administrator is directed to include ARPA monies as a funding source in the 2023 and 2024 proposed budgets.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this contract and funding would provide for \$148,000 annually for a full-time attorney and a part-time administrative assistant/outreach specialist and would include all funding needed to support the work of those positions, such as wages, benefits, supplies, and equipment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this funding shall be utilized by Legal Action to provide legal representation to Rock County tenants facing eviction who qualify under Legal Action's income eligibility guideline.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any contract between Rock County and Legal Action shall include a requirement for quarterly reporting to Rock County.

Respectfully submitted,

HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

absent  
Brian Knudson, Chair

/s/Sally Jean Weaver-Landers  
Sally Jean Weaver-Landers, Vice Chair

/s/Pam Bostwick  
Pam Bostwick

/s/Stephanie Aegerter  
Stephanie Aegerter

/s/Russel Podzilni  
Russell Podzilni

absent  
Ashley Hoffman

/s/Kathy Schulz  
Kathy Schulz

/s/Shirley Williams  
Shirley Williams

absent  
Angelina Reyes

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

While the County Board approved funding for this project in the 2022 Budget and during budget adoption discussed providing funding to Legal Action of Wisconsin to provide these services, separate action is needed to authorize the contract.

/s/Josh Smith

Josh Smith  
County Administrator

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 and 59.51, Wis. Stats.

/s/Richard Greenlee

Richard Greenlee  
Corporation Counsel

FISCAL NOTE:

This program will be funded by the County's ARPA allocation. No additional County funds are required.

/s/Sherry Oja

Sherry Oja  
Finance Director

**Committee Action**