



# Broward County

## Legislation Text

File #: 21-979, Version: 1

### **Broward County Commission Regular Meeting**

**Director's Name:** Keith D. Bostick (Deputy Director)

**Department:** Human Services

**Division:** Family Success Administration

### Information

#### Requested Action

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE County Administrator to execute Agreement between Broward County and Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc., subject to review for legal sufficiency by the Office of the County Attorney, in the amount of \$1,220,000, effective retroactively from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021, with four options to renew, to provide legal services to residents of Broward County; authorize the County Administrator to execute amendments to the Agreement, subject to the review for legal sufficiency by the Office of the County Attorney, that do not increase the annual funding amount or significantly alter the approved scope of work; and authorize the County Administrator to take all necessary administrative and budgetary actions to implement the Agreement.

#### Why Action is Necessary

Agreements with external agencies require approval by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners ("Commission").

#### What Action Accomplishes

Approval of this Agreement ensures continuation of legal services to residents of Broward County who would be unable to retain legal counsel to protect their rights in areas such as housing, consumer rights, access to public benefits, immigration, domestic violence, violent crime, and child abandonment, abuse, or neglect.

#### Is this Action Goal Related

Yes

#### Previous Action Taken

None

#### Summary Explanation/Background

THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND THE FAMILY SUCCESS ADMINISTRATION DIVISION RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE ABOVE MOTION.

This item supports the Commission's value of "approaching human services collaboratively and compassionately, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable," and the goal to "collaborate with public and private partners to find creative, equitable, and responsible solutions to systemic community problems, especially permanent, supportive housing for persons experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness." This Agreement provides a framework for administering Broward County funding

of legal aid programs required under Florida Statutes.

Broward County funding for legal aid programs is addressed in Sections 29.008 and Section 939.185, Florida Statutes. Section 29.008(3)(a) requires counties to fund legal aid programs at a level equal or greater to that provided from filing fees and surcharges in Fiscal Year 2003. Section 939.185 (1)(a) allowed the Commission to adopt an additional court cost not to exceed \$65. Broward County uses 25% of the amount collected under that provision to fund legal aid programs required under Section 29.008(3)(a). The County must fund any remaining portion from general funds. The Agreement contains four one-year options to renew at the same required funding level.

Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc., ("LASBC") has provided legal services since 1973 to Broward County residents otherwise unable to retain legal counsel. These legal services include advocacy, arbitration, forms assistance, class action litigation, legal counseling, domestic relations including dependent children, landlord-tenant disputes, and home-ownership preservation. LASBC was the legal aid program provider funded in fiscal year 2003, and at the time was the only provider of free civil legal aid services in Broward County. LASBC is still the only entity in Broward County that qualifies for this funding.

Under the Agreement, LASBC will annually serve a minimum of 400 individuals/families facing eviction or a termination of the tenancy agreement, a minimum of 200 residents with homeownership preservation issues, a minimum of 100 dependent children in need of an appropriate permanency goal, and a minimum of 100 undocumented immigrants and victims of domestic violence, violent crime, abandonment, abuse, or neglect.

Outcomes from the prior Agreement were met and the same outcomes will apply to the new Agreement. At least 50% of customers facing eviction will either avoid eviction or negotiate a termination of the tenancy agreement; at least 50% of customers with homeownership preservation issues will avoid loss of their home; at least 40% of dependent children will attain an appropriate permanency goal; and at least 50% of those facing immigration issues will avoid deportation, achieve family reunification, or finalize their immigration status. Retroactive approval is needed due to processing delays related to Covid-19.

The Agreement will be reviewed for legal sufficiency by the Office of the County Attorney prior to approval and execution by the County Administrator.

### **Source of Additional Information**

Ismael A. Martinez, Director, Family Success Administration Division, (954) 357-6367

Natalie M. Beasley, Assistant Director, Family Success Administration Division, (954) 357-6367

### **Fiscal Impact**

#### **Fiscal Impact/Cost Summary**

Funding for this Agreement is included in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, \$185,880 is from the Court Cost Fund (10105) and \$1,034,120 is from Broward County's General Fund (10010). Funding for renewal options will be appropriated in the operating budget of the corresponding Fiscal Year.