



Legal Services Advocacy Project
970 Raymond Avenue, Suite G-40
St. Paul, MN 55114

February 25, 2022

The Honorable Warren Limmer, Chair
Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Comm.
Minnesota Senate
3221 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Ron Latz, Ranking Minority Member
Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Comm.
Minnesota Senate
2215 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Mark Johnson, Vice Chair
Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Comm.
Minnesota Senate
3111 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: S.F. 3029 – Eliminating Copy Fees for Uncertified Court Documents

Dear Chairman Limmer, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Minority Leader Latz and Committee Members:

Legal Aid writes in support of SF 3029. A ban on charging a fee for an uncertified copies of court documents and records obtained in person or online makes sense and would be of great benefit to Legal Aid attorneys and their clients.

Access to court records is critical for our attorneys in representing our clients and to the matter at issue in their cases. It is especially helpful for our attorneys and clients in rural parts of the state where the ability to access and download copies of documents online saves significant time and money.

In addition, our low-income clients are harmed by the existence of records, such as eviction filings, to which they have a barrier to access. Removing fees would better enable, for example, tenants who have been denied housing based mistaken identity (which we have seen more than once) to demonstrate that the eviction filing on which the denial was based was not filed against them but rather against someone with the same or similar name.

Further, removing barriers to access to court records for low-income families can help them take the steps they need to fix their records. Some families are denied housing due to records that are many years old. They need access to the records to begin an expungement action. Access to records for families themselves can help bridge a gap in access to justice. While a small fee may seem to be of little consequence to some, to our clients who struggle financially it can be a high barrier.

Thank you for allowing Legal Aid the opportunity to comment on this bill. We urge passage of SF 3029.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Elwood".

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney