

Support AB 330 - Appointed Legal Counsel in Civil Cases

While the Constitution guarantees the right to counsel in criminal cases, there is no such federal right for civil cases. In 2009, California passed landmark legislation that created pilot programs across the state to provide legal counsel to low-income parties for civil cases that pertain to issues affecting basic human needs, such as child custody, housing-related matters, domestic violence, probate conservatorship, and elder abuse. These programs, collectively known as the Shriver Project, are funded by various court filing fees and they have given tens of thousands of Californians equal standing in civil cases that have the potential to dramatically impact their lives. Additionally, data shows that overall court efficiency has improved as a result of the programs because when both sides of a dispute have representation, time and money is saved. The pilot programs have been so successful that California passed legislation to make them permanent in 2016.

Assembly member Jesse Gabriel has introduced A.B. 330, Appointed Legal Counsel in Civil Cases, to expand the Shriver Project and allow more Californians to

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receive counsel for potentially life-altering civil matters. The bill will generate an additional \$11 million by increasing fees on certain court filings by \$15, and will expand the program to include a broader set of family law matters. The bill also requires data collection to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the programs. Unequal access to representation leads to unequal outcomes; AB 330 will help ensure that Californians are given meaningful access to justice regardless of their financial status.

Los Angeles County should support legislation that will expand equal access to legal counsel in potentially life-altering civil matters.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County's Legislative Advocates in Sacramento to support AB 330 (Gabriel), Appointed Legal Counsel in Civil Cases.

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JH:kc