



INSTITUTE *for the* ADVANCEMENT
of the AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM



UNIVERSITY *of*
DENVER

IAALS Comments In Support of the California Paraprofessional Program Working Group's Final Recommendations

September 23, 2021

Via Zoom

Good afternoon, my name is Michael Houlberg and I'm a Manager at IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver. IAALS is a national research institute that works on these very access to justice issues, and I would like to voice my support for the California Paraprofessional Program.

Study after study, data shows there is a clear unmet need for legal services, and one of the underlying causes is the cost of those services. There is an overwhelming number of people who do not qualify for legal aid and who also cannot afford an attorney. And unfortunately pro bono work has not and cannot solve this issue. So something has got to give, and this paraprofessional program is a solution with promise and it deserves the chance to be developed and tested.

Opponents have pointed to the Washington Limited License Legal Technicians program as evidence that these paraprofessional programs don't work. But one state's experience with a very different program is not guaranteed to be California's experience with the proposal at hand. Two big differences from Washington's program that will bring more people to join the California program are the expanded practice areas that include high-volume cases and the reasonable education requirements.

The main goal here is to better serve the public, and that includes making sure they are served by someone who is competent. The Paraprofessional Program Working Group has laid out robust education requirements, 1,000 hours of practical training, and a discipline system structure that includes key components of the attorney discipline system.

And so for each of these reasons I ask the Board of Trustees to accept these recommendations and move forward with the Paraprofessional Program. Thank you.

Michael Houlberg

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