

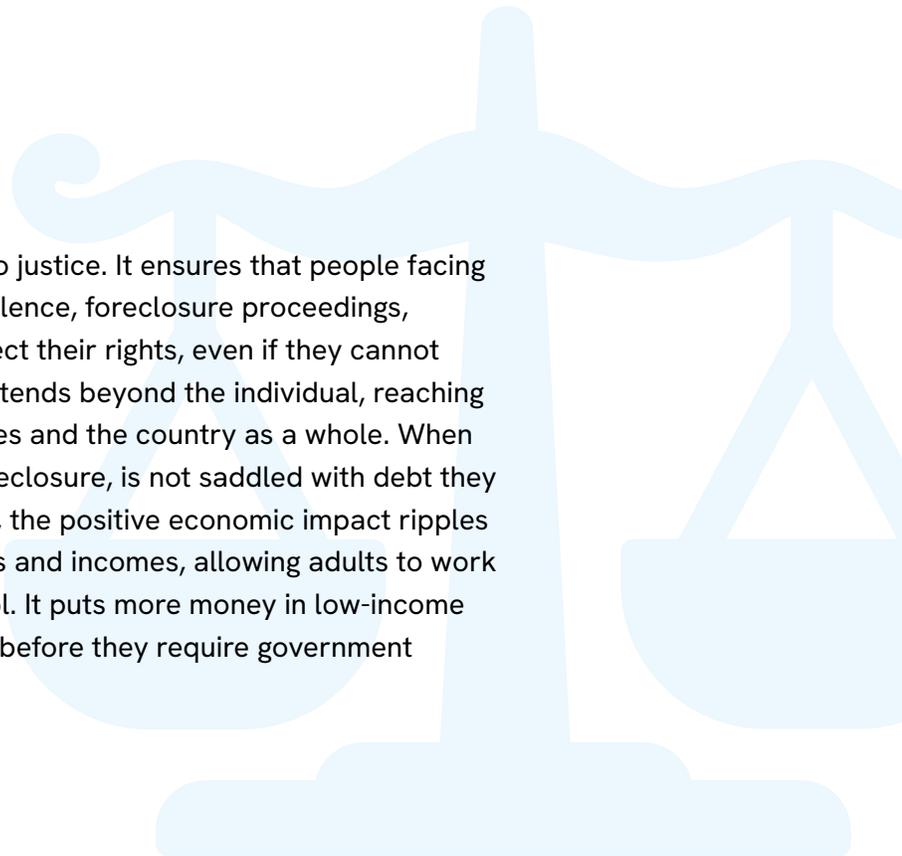
# The Economic Case for Civil Legal Aid

A Systematic Review of Economic Impact Studies

Office of Data Governance and Analysis Research Brief 2025

## Introduction

Civil legal aid is a cornerstone of equal access to justice. It ensures that people facing serious legal challenges — such as domestic violence, foreclosure proceedings, unfair debt collection or wage theft — can protect their rights, even if they cannot afford a lawyer. But the value of civil legal aid extends beyond the individual, reaching deep into the economic fabric of our communities and the country as a whole. When someone escapes domestic violence, avoids foreclosure, is not saddled with debt they do not owe or receives wages they have earned, the positive economic impact ripples outward. Civil legal aid stabilizes families, homes and incomes, allowing adults to work and children to meet their full potential at school. It puts more money in low-income Americans' pockets. It also helps resolve issues before they require government intervention, saving taxpayers money.



Over the past two decades, more than 50 independent studies have sought to quantify the economic impact of civil legal aid. These evaluations span jurisdictions large and small, rural and urban and use a range of accepted methodologies to measure economic impact. While the specifics differ, the findings are strikingly consistent: **civil legal aid generates significant financial value, with an average return of \$7 for every \$1 spent.**

This brief reviews 56 civil legal aid economic impact studies conducted between 2003 and 2023. The studies are detailed in **Appendix Table 1**.

## We Explore:

1

The scope of the studies (the types of financial benefits of civil legal aid included in the analysis).

2

The methodologies they employ to calculate economic impact and return on investment.

3

The limitations of existing models.

**Together, these studies demonstrate that civil legal aid consistently delivers economic value that far exceeds its cost.**

# Studies of the Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Data Governance and Analysis (ODGA) compiled all known statewide studies evaluating the economic impact of general civil legal aid. Studies focused exclusively on one area of civil legal aid, such as eviction, were excluded. Additionally, evaluations limited to specific localities or smaller geographic areas within a state were not included in this analysis.

The 56 independent evaluations included in this analysis examine the economic impact of statewide civil legal aid programs in 39 states across the United States, ranging from Alabama to Wisconsin. Conducted between 2003 and 2023, these studies encompass a diverse array of legal issues, including housing, family law, employment, public benefits and consumer matters. They employ different methodologies with varying rigor (see **Common Methodologies Used** below) and differ considerably in their depth; however, all reach the same conclusion: civil legal aid delivers economic value that exceeds its costs.

Not all studies calculated returns on investment (ROIs). Of the 42 studies that did, reported ROIs ranged from \$1.15<sup>1</sup> to \$17.99<sup>2</sup> per dollar spent (**Table 1**). The average ROI was \$6.72, with a median of \$6.77. Studies in Louisiana in 2022 (\$17.99),<sup>3</sup> Maine in 2015 (\$15.22)<sup>4</sup> and Maryland in 2023 (\$12.99)<sup>5</sup> reported the highest returns. Studies in Ohio from 2010 (\$1.15)<sup>6</sup>, Illinois in 2010 (\$1.80)<sup>7</sup> and Missouri in 2008 (\$1.84)<sup>8</sup> reported the lowest ROIs. Even the studies with the lowest estimated ROI demonstrate that civil legal aid is a self-sustaining intervention.

**Table 1: Overview of Statewide Studies of Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid**



These studies present a remarkably consistent picture of the economic benefit of civil legal aid across geographies, years and methodological approaches. No matter how the ROI is measured — whether through direct recoveries, avoided public cost or broader economic ripple effects — the conclusion is clear: civil legal aid reliably produces more in value than it consumes.

Our review highlights the direct and indirect benefits generated by investing in civil legal aid, which the studies use to quantify its economic and social impact. Additionally, our review sheds light on the various methodologies used to measure the return on investment of legal aid, offering insight into how different approaches capture its full value. In this brief, we examine these findings in greater detail.

**Civil legal aid is a fiscally responsible investment that benefits taxpayers, families and communities.**

# Scope of the Studies

Studies of the economic impact of civil legal aid typically begin by calculating the financial inputs, or funding, for civil legal aid. Legal aid organizations routinely file reports of their finances to local, state and federal funders. For example, every LSC grantee files an annual Grantee Activity Report detailing their revenue and expenditure. All of the studies of the impact of civil legal aid included in this review begin with extensive and comparable data on the funding of civil legal aid. However, these studies differ significantly in terms of the outputs measured. Some focus solely on direct client financial gains, while others also account for indirect benefits, such as reduced public spending and broader economic ripple effects. Additionally, the studies vary in scope regarding the timing of measured benefits, with some concentrating on immediate or short-term outcomes and others estimating longer-term impacts.

## Direct Benefits of Civil Legal Aid

The direct benefits of civil legal aid are those that provide immediate and measurable financial impacts, often to the represented client. Almost all independent evaluations of the economic impact of civil legal aid include some direct economic benefits. These direct benefits include **financial recoveries** for clients, **avoided costs**, as well as **public cost savings** (Table 2).

Direct benefits, in the form of financial recovery, from civil legal aid are significant. The 2016 study of civil legal aid in Florida, for example, found that legal aid programs in Florida helped clients recover over \$264.3 million in direct benefits, like recovered wages, child support and Social Security payments.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the 2015 study of civil legal aid in Tennessee showed legal aid recovered \$64.3 million in direct benefits for their clients.<sup>10</sup>

Cost avoidance represents another significant direct benefit of civil legal aid, capturing the expenses that individuals and businesses and nonprofits would likely incur without legal intervention. A 2017 Iowa study found that civil legal aid helped domestic violence survivors avoid an estimated \$11.6 million in healthcare, property damage and lost productivity costs.<sup>11</sup> Another study in Illinois determined that, by preventing or delaying over 1,000 evictions and foreclosures in 2011, civil legal aid prevented hundreds of families from entering homelessness and avoided approximately \$1.9 million in emergency shelter costs in 2012 — in addition to saving many families the costs of moving.<sup>12</sup> These savings reflect reduced spending on shelter operations, administration and residential services — demonstrating how legal aid not only protects families from housing instability but also generates meaningful cost savings for public systems.

Another significant category of direct benefit is taxpayer savings. By preventing evictions and foreclosures, civil legal aid reduces the need for emergency government assistance, which can cost thousands of dollars per family.<sup>13</sup> In domestic violence cases, legal aid reduces the use of emergency medical services, protective housing and law enforcement, which reduces public expenditures.<sup>14</sup> In 2017, legal aid programs in California generated more than \$43.3 million in direct savings for clients, including avoided costs related to housing displacement, healthcare and financial exploitation.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 2: Types of Direct Benefits of Civil Legal Aid**

| Direct Benefit Type        | What This Looks Like   | What It Does  |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Financial Recovery</b>  | Wage theft claims, enforcement of child support obligations, recovery of veterans' benefits, disability and Social Security and defense against scams and dishonest contracting practices. | Helps clients meet essential needs and support their families. Brings income into households that gets reinvested in local economies — covering rent, utilities, groceries and transportation.  |
| <b>Avoided Cost</b>        | Eviction defense, foreclosure prevention, debt defense, protection orders and defense against scams and dishonest contracting practices.   | Keeps families housed and safe. Avoids the costs associated with moving home, additional interest on loans due to damaged credit, healthcare costs and time off work. Avoids costs to charities providing crisis support (e.g., food kitchens and shelters) and costs to landlords associated with finding new tenants. |
| <b>Public Cost Savings</b> | Timely legal intervention in housing, domestic violence and debt cases.  | Saves government money by preventing escalation and limiting use of emergency housing, medical services, public benefits, law enforcement and other public systems.   |

## Indirect Benefits of Civil Legal Aid

In addition to direct benefits, civil legal aid produces significant indirect benefits that contribute to long-term economic growth and community stability. These indirect benefits can be thought of as the “ripple effects” of the direct benefits of civil legal aid.

One major indirect benefit is increased economic growth. When legal aid helps a client recover income — whether through benefits, wages or support payments — that money is typically spent within the local economy on rent, groceries, childcare, transportation and other necessities. These dollars circulate, supporting small businesses, generating local tax revenue and sustaining employment. These effects are in addition to the direct benefits provided by civil legal aid. For example, the direct benefits of defending workers against wage theft, discrimination or wrongful termination are continued income and self-sufficiency for the worker, as well as reduced reliance on unemployment benefits and other forms of public assistance. The indirect benefits of economic prosperity are possible due to workers' continued spending and the sustained fiscal health of governments, which is facilitated by their ongoing contributions to the tax base.

Another significant indirect benefit is community stability. By helping people stay housed and employed and ending cycles of violence, legal aid helps bonds within communities, increases the strength of support networks and provides children increased opportunities to achieve their full potential. Children in safe and stable families are more likely to stay in school, complete their education and pursue steady employment — building intergenerational economic resilience and reducing crime rates.<sup>16</sup>

# Common Methodologies Used in Evaluating ROI

To quantify the economic impact of civil legal aid, studies frequently employ a combination of methodologies that include cost-benefit analysis (CBA), economic multiplier models and social return on investment (SROI).

## Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) is the most straightforward approach, comparing the total financial benefits of legal aid to its costs. This method assesses direct financial recoveries, avoided costs and taxpayer savings from avoided costly interventions. It provides clear, quantifiable metrics easily understood by policymakers and stakeholders. However, it often underrepresents long-term or indirect social benefits, which may only become measurable over extended periods.

## Economic Multiplier Models

Economic Multiplier Models are used to assess the broader economic impact of civil legal aid. This methodology estimates the circulation of recovered funds through local economies, thereby generating additional economic growth. It captures the broader indirect economic benefits.

One of the most common economic multiplier models is the Regional Input-Output Multiplier System (RIMS II), developed by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). RIMS II offers a standardized approach to assessing the impact of various investments on local economies. In the context of civil legal aid, RIMS II helps quantify how funding for legal services translates into broader, secondary benefits throughout the community.

The Maryland Economic Impact of Civil Legal Services Study (2012)<sup>17</sup> applied an economic multiplier model to measure the broader financial impact of legal aid funding. The study found that \$9.9 million in federal benefits secured by legal aid programs had a total economic impact of \$12.6 million after applying sector-specific multipliers. For example, SNAP benefits were multiplied by 1.79, reflecting increased spending at grocery stores, while Medicaid and Medicare were multiplied by a 2.23 multiplier, capturing their impact on healthcare jobs and services.

## Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) takes the economic multiplier models a step further by identifying both direct and indirect social benefits, in addition to indirect economic benefits. SROI methods assign monetary values to indirect benefits such as improved public health, greater community safety and long-term stability. While SROI is built on the logic of cost-benefit analysis, it differs in that it attempts to quantify outcomes not traditionally captured in financial terms, such as improved well-being or reduced harm.

Many studies of the economic impact of civil legal aid combine **SROI** and **economic multiplier models** to ensure a balanced, data-driven approach that reflects both immediate financial returns and long-term societal gains. For instance, the Louisiana Economic Impact Study (2022) applied SROI to measure the broader financial and social benefits of civil legal aid. The study found that for every \$1 invested, legal aid returned \$17.99 in economic and social value, resulting in an SROI of 1,799%.<sup>18</sup> By assigning monetary values to indirect benefits such as preventing homelessness, reducing domestic violence and improving financial stability, the analysis demonstrated how legal aid funding extends beyond direct client services to generate long-term economic and community benefits.

Regardless of which methodology is applied — whether cost-benefit analysis, economic multipliers or social return on investment — studies consistently show that civil legal aid yields a positive return. The financial value may vary depending on what is measured, but the overall conclusion is clear and replicable: **civil legal aid generates more in economic benefit than it costs to deliver.**

# Limitations of ROI Models for Civil Legal Aid

ROI studies of civil legal aid have important limitations that should be acknowledged. These limitations do not undermine the core conclusions — they highlight the complexity of measuring impact in systems that intersect legal, social and economic outcomes.

First, methodological approaches vary widely across the studies we evaluated. Some include only direct financial recoveries for clients, while others incorporate broader public cost savings or multiplier effects. These differences make it difficult to compare ROI figures directly or aggregate them into a single national average.

Second, not all outcomes can be easily monetized. Impacts such as improved mental health, educational attainment, reduced trauma or civic engagement are meaningful and often substantial — but they are rarely included in ROI calculations due to the difficulty of assigning consistent dollar values. As a result, many studies likely understate the full economic contribution of legal aid.

Third, most evaluations are conducted at the statewide or system level, which, while valuable, can obscure the especially high returns generated by targeted interventions — such as preventing domestic violence, stopping illegal evictions, or securing benefits for vulnerable populations. These case types often produce particularly strong economic results, but their individual impact may be diluted in broader aggregate models.

Even with these limitations, the findings remain clear and consistent: across a wide range of methodologies and contexts, civil legal aid delivers a positive return on investment. In fact, existing studies likely provide a conservative estimate of the full economic value of legal aid.

## Conclusion

Across more than 50 independent studies conducted over two decades, the data shows that civil legal aid generates positive returns for families, communities and local economies. These impacts are seen not only in direct financial recoveries — such as wages, benefits and support payments — but also in cost savings to emergency services, public institutions and long-term social programs.

While methodologies vary and some benefits are difficult to quantify, the overall pattern is clear. Whether measured through cost-benefit analysis, multiplier modeling or social return on investment frameworks, civil legal aid consistently produces financial returns that exceed its cost. These returns are not incidental — they are a product of legal aid's core function: resolving issues that have both legal and economic dimensions.

Though current models may understate the full scope of long-term and indirect benefits, the existing evidence provides a reliable foundation for understanding the value of legal aid. Continued research — especially using standardized metrics and targeted evaluations — will help further illuminate where and how legal aid delivers the greatest impact.

# Appendix Table 1: Economic Impact Studies included in this Analysis

| State      | Year      | Study   | ROI<br>(for every \$1 invested) |
|------------|-----------|---|---------------------------------|
| Alabama    | 2014      | Byrnes, J. (2014). Alabama Legal Aid Social Return on Investment. CSACO Community Services Analysis, LLC.   | \$8.84                          |
| Alaska     | 2011      | Thayer, K. and Garwold, K. (2012) An Analysis of the Economic Impacts and Social Benefits of Assistance Provided by Alaska Legal Services Corporation. The Resources for Great Programs, Inc.   | \$5.00                          |
| Arizona    | 2011      | Byrnes, J. (2013, January). Community Legal Services, Inc. Social Return on Investment Analysis Arizona. CSACO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$6.84                          |
| Arkansas   | 2013      | Cavallari, P.; Devlin, M.; and Tucci, R. (2014, October). Justice Measured: An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid in Arkansas. Arkansas Access to Justice Commission.   | \$5.20                          |
| California | 2017      | The State Bar of California (2019, January). Making a Difference: California Legal Aid.   | N/A                             |
| Colorado   | 2022      | John Byrnes, Colorado Legal Services: Social Return on Investment Summary (Community Services Analysis LLC, 2023)   | \$6.19                          |
| Colorado   | 2012      | John Byrnes, Colorado Legal Services: Social Return on Investment Summary (Community Services Analysis LLC, 2012)   | \$6.50                          |
| Delaware   | 2013-2015 | Teufel, J.; Gosset, K.; Hayman, R. (2017). Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid in Delaware. Combined Campaign for Justice.  | \$7.23                          |
| Florida    | 2015      | The Resource for Great Programs (2016). Economic Impacts of Civil Legal Aid Organizations Funded in Part by The Florida Bar Foundation.   | \$7.19                          |
| Florida    | 2008      | Florida TaxWatch (2010, February). The Economic Impact of Legal Aid Services in the State of Florida.   | \$4.78                          |
| Georgia    | 2011      | Smith, K.; Brewer, A.; and Garwold, K. (2013, February). Economic Impacts of Civil Legal Aid Organizations in Georgia: Civil Justice for Low-Income People Produces Ripple Effects That Benefit Every Segment of the Community. The Resource for Great Programs, Inc. | \$8.57                          |

# Appendix Table 1: Economic Impact Studies included in this Analysis (cont.)

| State     | Year | Study  | ROI<br>(for every \$1 invested) |
|-----------|------|--|---------------------------------|
| Illinois  | 2010 | Kushner, J. (2012, May). Legal Aid in Illinois: Selected Social and Economic Benefits. Chicago: Social IMPACT Research Center.   | \$1.80                          |
| Indiana   | 2017 | Byrnes, J. (2018). Coalition for Court Access Indiana's Legal Aid Organizations Economic Impact Analysis. CSACO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$6.70                          |
| Iowa      | 2017 | Iowa Legal Aid (2018). Iowa Legal Aid: Making an Impact.   | \$4.30                          |
| Iowa      | 2011 | Iowa Legal Aid (2011). The Economic Impact of Iowa Legal Aid.  | \$6.71                          |
| Kansas    | 2023 | Byrnes, J. (2023, December). Social Economic Impact and Return on Investment Analysis for the Year 2023 . CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$7.49                          |
| Louisiana | 2022 | Byrnes, J. (2022, December). The Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services in the State of Louisiana. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$17.99                         |
| Louisiana | 2019 | Byrnes, J. (2020, December). The Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services in the State of Louisiana. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$9.18                          |
| Louisiana | 2016 | Byrnes, J. (2016, December). The Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services in the State of Louisiana. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$8.73                          |
| Louisiana | 2009 | Richardson, J. (2011, January). Legal Services Programs in Louisiana: Their Economic Impact on the State of Louisiana.   | \$2.40                          |
| Maine     | 2015 | Gabe, T. (2016, November). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid Services in Maine.   | \$15.22                         |
| Maryland  | 2023 | John Byrnes, Maryland Legal Services Corporation: Social Economic Impact and Return on Investment Analysis of the funding provided for Legal Aid services in the State of Maryland (Community Services Analysis LLC, 2023) | \$12.92                         |
| Maryland  | 2012 | Maryland Access to Justice Commission (2013, January). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Services in Maryland.  | N/A                             |

# Appendix Table 1: Economic Impact Studies included in this Analysis (cont.)

| State         | Year | Study   | ROI<br>(for every \$1 invested) |
|---------------|------|---|---------------------------------|
| Massachusetts | 2013 | Becker, E. (2014, October). The Boston Bar Association Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts. NERA Economic Consulting.   | \$5.00                          |
| Massachusetts | 2012 | Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (2012). Civil Legal Aid Yields Economic Benefits to Clients and to the Commonwealth: Some Benefits from FY12 Advocacy.   | N/A                             |
| Massachusetts | 2011 | Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (2011). Civil Legal Aid Yields Economic Benefits to Clients and to the Commonwealth: Some Benefits from FY11 Advocacy.   | N/A                             |
| Massachusetts | 2009 | Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (2009). Civil Legal Aid Yields Economic Benefits to Clients and to the Commonwealth: Some of the Economic Effects in FY09.   | N/A                             |
| Michigan      | 2020 | Byrnes, J. (2021). Michigan Legal Aid SROI Report 2019 & 2020: Social Economic Impact and Social Return on Funding Investment. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$5.82                          |
| Michigan      | 2019 | Byrnes, J. (2021). Michigan Legal Aid SROI Report 2019 & 2020: Social Economic Impact and Social Return on Funding Investment. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$7.60                          |
| Minnesota     | 2014 | Minnesota Legal Services Coalition (2015). Economic Impact Measurements of Minnesota Legal Aid.   | \$3.94                          |
| Mississippi   | 2016 | Mississippi Center for Legal Services, Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services (2017). Clients, Businesses, and Communities Benefit from Legal Help Provided by Mississippi Center for Legal Services, Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. | \$12.05                         |
| Missouri      | 2008 | The Resource for Great Programs (2009, Fall). Investing in Justice, Strengthening Communities: How Everyone in Missouri Benefits from Funding for Legal Aid.  | \$1.84                          |
| Montana       | 2013 | Montana Legal Services Association (2015). The Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid to the State of Montana.  | \$10.00                         |
| Nebraska      | 2007 | Feelhaver, R. and Deichert, J. (2008, March). The Economic Impact of Legal Aid of Nebraska.   | \$3.97                          |
| Nebraska      | 2003 | Kelso, T.; Deichert, J.; Feelhaver, R.; Kammerer, M. (2004, June). The Economic Impact of Legal Aid of Nebraska.  | \$4.00                          |

# Appendix Table 1: Economic Impact Studies included in this Analysis (cont.)

| State          | Year | Study   | ROI<br>(for every \$1 invested) |
|----------------|------|---|---------------------------------|
| Nevada         | 2017 | The Resource for Great Programs (2018). Nevada Legal Needs and Economic Impact Study.   | \$7.00                          |
| New Hampshire  | 2011 | Smith, K. (2013, February). The Economic Impact of Civil Legal Services in New Hampshire: Achieving Justice and Boosting the Economy. The Resource for Great Programs, Inc.   | \$6.20                          |
| New Mexico     | 2014 | Byrnes, J. (2014). New Mexico Civil Legal Services Programs Social Return on Investment Summary. Community Services Analysis, LLC.  | \$3.56                          |
| New York       | 2017 | Steinkamp, N. (2018, November). Summary of Economic Benefits and Savings from Civil Legal Services in New York for Calendar Year 2017. Stout Risius Ross, LLC.  | \$10.00                         |
| North Carolina | 2012 | Irvine, M. (2014, February). A 108% Return on Investment: The Economic Impact to the State of North Carolina of Civil Legal Services in 2012. North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission.  | \$10.80                         |
| Ohio           | 2017 | Ohio Access to Justice Foundation (2019). Strength in Justice: Legal Aid in Ohio.   | \$2.90                          |
| Ohio           | 2010 | Beckwith, K. and Garber, R. (2010). Strength in Justice: Ohio's Legal Aids Energizing Our Economy and Building Our Communities. Community Research Partners.  | \$1.15                          |
| Oklahoma       | 2010 | Agee, S. (2011, November). The Economic Impact of Legal Aid in Oklahoma. Economic Research and Policy Institute.  | \$2.54                          |
| Oregon         | 2018 | Byrnes, J. (2020, March). Social Economic Impact and Return on Funding Investment Analysis for the Year 2018. Community Services Analysis, LLC.   | \$3.43                          |
| Pennsylvania   | 2018 | Flaherty, S.; Meyer, J. and Yost, B. (2020, January). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts Board.  | \$12.00                         |
| Pennsylvania   | 2011 | Supreme Court of Pennsylvania PAIOLTA Board (2012, April). The Economic Impact of Outcomes Obtained for Legal Aid Clients Benefits Everyone in Pennsylvania.  | \$11.00                         |
| Tennessee      | 2013 | Smith, K. and Thayer, K. (2015, March). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid Organizations in Tennessee: Civil Justice for Low-Income People Produces Ripple Effects that Benefit Every Segment of the Community. The Resource for Great Programs, Inc. | \$11.21                         |

# Appendix Table 1: Economic Impact Studies included in this Analysis (cont.)

| State         | Year | Study   | ROI<br>(for every \$1 invested) |
|---------------|------|---|---------------------------------|
| Texas         | 2011 | Perryman, R. (2013, February). Current and Potential Economic Benefits of Legal Aid Services in Texas: 2013 Update. The Perryman Group.   | \$7.48                          |
| Texas         | 2008 | Perryman, R. (2009, February). The Impact of Legal Aid Services on Economic Activity in Texas: An Analysis of Current Efforts and Expansion Potential. The Perryman Group.  | \$7.42                          |
| Utah          | 2013 | John Byrnes, Utah Legal Services: Social Return on Investment Summary (Community Services Analysis LLC, 2013)   | \$8.99                          |
| Vermont       | 2017 | The Resource for Great Programs (2019, June). Economic Impacts of Civil Legal Assistance Programs in Vermont.   | \$11.00                         |
| Virginia      | 2021 | The Resource for Great Programs, Inc. (December, 2021). Report to the Commonwealth and the General Assembly on the Work of Virginia's Legal Aid Programs.   | \$7.34                          |
| Virginia      | 2009 | Smith, K. and Brewer, A. (2011, September). Economic Impacts of Civil Legal Aid Organizations in Virginia: Civil Justice for Low-Income People Produces Ripple Effects That Benefit Every Segment of the Community. The Resource for Great Programs, Inc. | \$5.27                          |
| Virginia      | 2008 | The Resource for Great Programs. (2009). Legal Services Corporation of Virginia: Report to the Commonwealth and the General Assembly.   | \$2.62                          |
| West Virginia | 2018 | Gaidzanwa, M.; Nicholas, K.; Absar, K. (2020, October). Economic Impact Report for Legal Aid of West Virginia Civil Legal Services. The Improve Group.  | \$3.04                          |
| Wisconsin     | 2021 | The Resource for Great Programs, Inc. (July 2023). Report to Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc.   | \$8.40                          |

# Endnotes

1. Beckwith, K. and Garber, R. (2010). Strength in Justice: Ohio's Legal Aids Energizing Our Economy and Building Our Communities. Community Research Partners.
2. Byrnes, J. (2022, December). The Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services in the State of Louisiana. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.
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10. Smith, K. and Thayer, K. (2015, March). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid Organizations in Tennessee: Civil Justice for Low-Income People Produces Ripple Effects that Benefit Every Segment of the Community. The Resource for Great Programs, Inc.
11. Iowa Legal Aid (2018). Iowa Legal Aid: Making an Impact.
12. Kushner, J. (2012, May). Legal Aid in Illinois: Selected Social and Economic Benefits. Chicago: Social IMPACT Research Center.
13. Providing legal counsel for low-income people at risk of losing their homes saves the city of New York \$320 million a year. See Stout Risius Ross Inc, The Financial Cost and Benefits of Establishing a Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings Under Intro 214-A, (Paper Presented for: Pro Bono and Legal Services Committee of the New York City Bar Association, March 16, 2016).
14. Legal Aid Resources. (2021). The impact of legal aid in domestic violence cases. <https://legalaidresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/domestic-violence.pdf>.
15. The State Bar of California (2019, January). Making a Difference: California Legal Aid
16. Sandstrom, H., & Huerta, S. (2013). The negative effects of instability on child development: A research synthesis. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32706/412899-The-Negative-Effects-of-Instability-on-Child-Development-A-Research-Synthesis.PDF>
17. Maryland Access to Justice Commission (2013, January). Economic Impact of Civil Legal Services in Maryland.
18. Byrnes, J. (2022, December). The Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services in the State of Louisiana. CASCO Community Services Analysis, LLC.

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## Contact Us

For additional information or questions about this report, please contact the Office of Data Governance and Analysis at [datateam@lsc.gov](mailto:datateam@lsc.gov).



**The fundamental mission of civil legal aid is to ensure fairness in our legal system by providing access to justice. The economic benefits it generates are substantial and undeniable.**

## About the Legal Services Corporation

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) was established by Congress in 1974 to promote equal access to justice. LSC operates as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and currently serves as the nation's single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income individuals. More than 90 percent of LSC's total funding is currently distributed to 130 independent non-profit legal aid organizations with more than 900 offices across the country. LSC grantees help constituents who live in households with annual incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. LSC's mission is to help provide high-quality civil legal aid to low-income people. To learn more about LSC, please visit [lsc.gov](https://www.lsc.gov).

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