Press Release

For Immediate Release

Colorado Legal Services announces retirement of Jonathan Asher as Executive Director, effective March 2023; search for new ED begins

Today, Colorado Legal Services (CLS) – a Colorado nonprofit legal aid program providing civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and seniors throughout the state – announced that its long-time Executive Director, Jonathan (Jon) Asher, intends to retire in March. A search to hire his successor has begun.

Jon has held the position of Executive Director of Colorado Legal Services since it was formed 23 years ago. Prior to assuming that role, he was the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Denver from 1980 until 1999, when the three Colorado legal aid organizations consolidated and became a single statewide program, Colorado Legal Services. Jon began his legal services career as a staff attorney with Colorado Rural Legal Services in Greeley, Colorado in 1971, immediately after graduating from Harvard Law School. He has spent his entire legal career – more than 50 years – working on behalf of poor people in Colorado.

Jon has played a key role in building one of the premier legal aid organizations in the country. Under his leadership, CLS today is financially strong, has the largest staff in its history, and enjoys broad support for its vitally important mission locally, statewide, and throughout the country. Jon is a nationally recognized expert and speaker on a broad range of legal aid issues, but more importantly, he is universally known as a tireless and effective advocate for low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities throughout the state, and beyond, and for those who represent them.

“I have been privileged to work with a Board, a staff, and volunteers that labor, always, to crystallize our vision, enhance our efforts, and diligently ensure our accountability to our clients, to our funders, and to our communities,” said Jon Asher. “CLS and I have grown to meet the challenges brought on by the consolidation of the separate and very different legal services programs in 1999, the various efforts to defund and restrict the scope of the work of federally funded legal services programs, economic downturns, political upheaval, and even an unexpected pandemic. Thousands of people in crisis – at a critical and uncertain time in their lives – have received high quality legal services because of our work.”

“We cannot begin to thank Jon enough for all he has done for legal services on behalf of Colorado’s poor throughout his remarkable career,” said Tina Smith, Chair of the CLS Board of Directors. “It goes without saying that Jon’s contributions to CLS and its predecessors, and the
legal service community in Colorado and the entire country – over more than 50 years – have been nothing short of extraordinary.”

CLS’s Board has formed a Search Committee, consisting of Board members, staff, and others, to identify and recommend a new Executive Director to the Board. The Search Committee is co-chaired by Board Members Anne J. Castle and Jeffrey T. Johnson. Patricia Pap of Management Information Exchange (MIE) has been engaged by the Board to assist with the search. Information about the Executive Director search will be available on CLS’s website, www.coloradolegalservices.org. Persons interested in applying for the CLS Executive Director position or who have questions should contact Patricia at ppap@mielegalaid.org. Questions about this press release may be directed to her as well.

About Colorado Legal Services: CLS is a Colorado nonprofit legal aid program providing civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and seniors throughout the entire state. CLS serves the 104,000-square-mile State of Colorado (the eighth largest state geographically in the country) through 13 regional offices that provide services in the areas of family law, housing law, including eviction and foreclosure defense, denials, reductions, and terminations of all manner of public benefits, elder law, consumer law, including defense of debt collections and bankruptcies, services to migrants and agricultural workers, services to survivors of violent crime and human trafficking, including visas and wage collections, criminal record sealing to restore access to jobs, housing, and education, and services to two tribal nations in the southwestern corner of Colorado. CLS also has an ID Unit that assists clients in obtaining or correcting identification documents; a Low-Income Taxpayers Clinic that assists clients with federal tax delinquencies, debts, and other tax-related issues; and a small Medical-Legal Partnership serving low-income patients at two UCHHealth clinics (affiliated with the University of Colorado) in Denver.

Almost 1.4 million Coloradans qualify financially for CLS’s services. CLS’s current staff of 80 attorneys and 55 paralegals is supplemented by a robust private attorney involvement program.

About Management Information Exchange and Patricia Pap: MIE is a national nonprofit organization which works closely with legal aid programs around the country on activities promoting excellence in legal aid management, leadership, supervision, and fundraising. Among its consulting services, MIE provides executive director search work for legal aid organizations. The primary consultant for CLS’s Executive Director search is Patricia Pap, Consultant to MIE. Patricia has been the leader of MIE’s executive director search work and the primary consultant in this work since its inception in 2005.