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25 Capitol Street, Room 424
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-6312

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November 20, 2019

The Honorable Mary Jane Wallner, Chairman
Fiscal Committee of the General Court
State House
Concord, N.H. 03301

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
And the Honorable Executive Council
State House
Concord, N.H. 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 604-A:1-b, Additional Funding, authorize the Judicial Council to receive an additional appropriation from funds not otherwise appropriated in the amount of \$325,000, upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council approval through June 30, 2020. Source of funds is 100% General Fund.

Funding is to be budgeted in account 02-07-07-070010-1101, entitled "Abuse & Neglect – (Non-CASA)" as follows:

Class/Expense	Class Title	Current Budget	Change	Revised Budget
108/500751	Provider Payments/ Legal Services	\$150,000	\$325,000	\$475,000

EXPLANATION

This account funds the court-ordered payments made to private guardians ad litem who provide services to abused and neglected children. Expenditures have exceeded our forecasts in this line. Without additional funding, the Judicial Council will be unable to pay the court-approved invoices for these services.

The State's preferred method of delivering these guardian-ad-litem services is through Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Hampshire (CASA). The opioid crisis has had a profound effect on child protection cases. CASA has not been able to meet the increased demand for guardian-ad-litem services in these cases. As a result, the Courts have turned to private providers to deliver these services to children, leading to increased expenditures by the Judicial Council from the account that funds payments to non-CASA guardians ad litem.

N.H.R.S.A. 169-C:10 provides that "In cases brought pursuant to this chapter involving a neglected or abused child, the court shall appoint a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or other approved

program guardian ad litem for the child. If a CASA or other approved program guardian ad litem is unavailable for appointment, the court may then appoint an attorney or other guardian ad litem as the guardian ad litem for the child.”

N.H.R.S.A. 604-A:1-a provides that “In cases involving a neglected or abused child, when a guardian ad litem is appointed for the child pursuant to RSA 169-C:10, the cost of such appointment shall be paid from funds appropriated for indigent defense pursuant to this chapter.”

N.H.R.S.A. 604-A:1-b provides that “in the event that expenditures for indigent defense by the Judicial Council are greater than amounts appropriated in the operating budget, the Judicial Council may request, with prior approval of the Fiscal Committee of the General Court, that the Governor and Council authorize additional funding. For funds requested and approved, the Governor is authorized to draw a warrant from any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.”

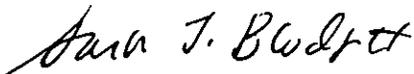
Total FY19 expenditures for this line were \$381,218. Through the end of October 2019, the Judicial Council has paid a total of \$132,947 for Abuse & Neglect – (Non-CASA) invoices, leaving a balance of \$17,053. Our year-to-date costs in this line are over \$30,000 more than last year’s costs. The Judicial Council has an additional \$25,000 in invoices waiting to be processed. The funds currently available in account 02-07-07-070010-1101 are insufficient to pay the court-approved invoices expected to arrive between now and the end of the current fiscal year.

It is expected that the account will require the addition of \$325,000 to meet the anticipated expenditures in this line through June 30, 2020.

This Agency will remain at your service to provide any requested information concerning the critical importance of this additional funding to the orderly administration of justice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sarah T. Blodgett
Executive Director