

2009-J6368

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION applauding and approving the foregoing steps that have been taken by the chief judge and the judiciary to institute an ongoing program with respect to civil legal services in the State of New York

WHEREAS, Millions of New Yorkers annually find themselves having to go to court and to navigate our complex court system; and

WHEREAS, The fair administration of justice requires that every person who must use the courts have access to adequate legal representation; and

WHEREAS, For such universal access to be a reality, there is need for a comprehensive commitment of bench, bar and community to assure that (i) there is an ongoing process of identifying the extent and nature of unmet civil legal service needs, especially where fundamental human needs are concerned or the matter involves society's most vulnerable members, including the elderly, children, struggling families, people with disabilities and abuse victims; and (ii) the New York State Legislature and the Governor are periodically apprised of those needs that are unmet; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Legislature finds the chief judge of New York has committed himself annually to preside over public hearings across the state, in collaboration with the presiding justices of each judicial department, the chief administrator of the courts and the president of the New York State Bar Association, to assess the extent and nature of unmet civil legal services needs; and

WHEREAS, The chief judge has appointed a task force, the Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, made up of distinguished New Yorkers representing the courts, civil legal services and pro bono providers, bar associations and bar foundations, government,

law schools, business and the not-for-profit community to assist him in recommending statewide priorities, defining the types of legal matters in which civil legal services are most needed, advocating for expanded services, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing programs, gathering and distributing information about programs, strategies and technological approaches that have proven successful, and issuing guidelines or best practices to help providers; and now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to applaud and approve the foregoing steps that have been taken by the chief judge and the judiciary to institute an ongoing program that will bring the State of New York closer to the ideal of equal access to civil justice; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body requests the chief judge annually report to the governor and the legislature concerning the findings of his statewide hearings and the work of the Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, with recommendations to address gaps in available resources to meet the need for civil legal services in the State of New York.