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**Iowa Legal Aid Able to Continue and Grow Eviction Diversion Project
Thanks to \$650,000 Wells Fargo Investment**

Since its inception, Iowa Legal Aid and its project partners have helped to prevent tens of thousands of low-income tenants from being evicted in Polk, Scott, Linn, Black Hawk, Johnson and Pottawattamie counties.

(Des Moines, Iowa) Wells Fargo announced today a \$650,000 catalytic grant to Iowa Legal Aid's Eviction Diversion Project, an innovative response to the eviction crisis that creates a new marketplace to alleviate housing instability throughout Iowa. Thanks to Wells Fargo's generosity, Iowa Legal Aid will continue and grow the statewide project's six courthouse Help Desks in Polk, Scott, Linn, Black Hawk, Johnson and Pottawattamie counties.

The Eviction Diversion Project is an innovative initiative that brings together key stakeholders to provide legal representation and rental assistance at the same time, onsite, where eviction cases are heard. It creates a rare "win-win" solution that secures housing for tenants, allows landlords to recoup lost small business income, and reduces congestion in overcrowded eviction courts. The project's new marketplace drives systemic transformation for tenants and the community working with tenants and landlords to get rent arrears paid, often without the need to file an eviction case. Iowa Legal Aid works with tenants to address legal problems that may be reducing their income, such as benefits denial, unlawful garnishments or unpaid child support.

The eviction crisis has had a disparate impact on women, communities of color, and the disabled as the tenants facing eviction statewide during the first year of the pandemic were 68% women, 40% communities of color and 29% people with disabilities. These groups face inequities that pre-dated the pandemic and were exacerbated by layoffs in the retail and hospitality sectors and school closures. This grant will help Iowa Legal Aid and its partners to address these inequities in the housing market.

"This project has been transformative. We've come together to create a statewide network of stakeholders intent upon funding a new way to address the eviction crisis. Since inception we have helped many thousands of Iowans avoid eviction," said Nick Smithberg, Iowa Legal Aid's Executive Director. "This project is also expensive, requiring a substantial commitment from our attorneys and other staff members throughout the state. This generous grant from Wells Fargo will help us to continue this important work."

"Having access to safe housing is so important to the well-being of Iowan individuals, families and communities," said Micah Kiel, Vice President, Iowa Community Relations, Wells

Fargo. “At Wells Fargo, we believe it is our responsibility as a corporate citizen to use our resources to help to support key housing programs such as the Eviction Diversion Project to ensure that those at a disadvantage have proper legal representation and the opportunity to stay in their homes.”

Wells Fargo funds will support and expand the capacity of the Project’s Help Desks in Polk, Scott, Linn, Black Hawk, Johnson and Pottawattamie counties where Iowa Legal Aid collaborates with local rent assistance administrators, volunteer attorneys and other community partners that provide non-legal services.

About Iowa Legal Aid:

Iowa Legal Aid, a nonprofit law firm, has helped low-income Iowans receive justice for more than 45 years. With Iowa Legal Aid’s assistance, low-income Iowans access the legal representation, advice, and support they need to resolve civil legal problems impacting their basic needs, including safe and sustainable housing, stable income, health care, and freedom from domestic violence and other abuse. Our legal interventions help individuals and families move from poverty and dependency to self-sufficiency. Iowa Legal Aid’s Regional Offices helps hundreds of low-income Iowans resolves critical civil legal problems every year. For more information about Iowa Legal Aid, visit <https://www.iowalegalaid.org/>

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