

**Michigan State Bar Foundation
Project Grants Committee
Summary of Virtual Meeting: November 3, 2025**

Present: Robert Riley, Chair, Lori A. Buiteweg, Hon. Shauna Dunning, Chad, Engelhardt, Ronald D. Keefe, Reginald Pacis, Dana Warnez, Peter H. Webster; members; Craig Lubben- Ex Officio, Staff Members, Jennifer Bentley, Mary Gladstone- Highland, and Liz Sempstrott.

A total of approximately \$1 million in current year funds is available for grants through 9/30/2026.

Proposals Recommended for Approval of Funding

Autism Alliance

Know Your Rights: Empowering Michigan Families on Special Education Rights

Amount Requested: \$50,000

Amount Recommended: \$50,000

Anticipate Time Period: 11/1/2025 – 10/31/2026

Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) proposes a statewide initiative to educate families on their legal rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), with a focus on the state complaint process. The project includes ten “Know Your Rights” workshops across Michigan, targeting parents, caregivers, and community partners. The workshops will provide practical tools for filing complaints and navigating special education systems.

The committee recommends funding the full amount of this request.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$50,000 AOJ FUNDS TO AUTISM ALLIANCE TO HELP COVER THE COST OF WORKSHOPS THAT PROVIDE PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR FILING COMPLAINTS AND NAVIGATING SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS.

Justice Speaks

Bridging the Gap: Innovative Legal Pathways to Family Preservation

Amount Requested: \$52,500

Amount Recommended: \$52,500

Anticipate Time Period: 1/1/2026 – 12/31/2026

Justice Speaks Legal Aid is a newly formed nonprofit focused on preventing unnecessary foster care placements by providing legal tools and social support to families in crisis. The project combines legal representation, caregiver education, and case management to help families arrange temporary caregiving during times of illness, incarceration, or homelessness.

While this is a first-time applicant, the organization is led by highly respected legal professionals and has already secured grant from the Oakland County Bar Foundation. The grant from OCBF requires a match and the grant from MSBF will meet that requirement. The proposal addresses a substantive legal area not currently covered by annual grantees and includes a strong evaluation plan.

The committee recommends funding the full amount of this request.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$52,500 AOJ FUNDS TO JUSTICE SPEAKS LEGAL AID TO PREVENT UNNECESSARY FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS BY PROVIDING LEGAL TOOLS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT TO FAMILIES IN CRISIS.

Proposals Not Recommended for Funding

Michigan Health Improvement Alliance (MiHIA)

Clean Slate Collaborative

Amount Requested: \$53,625

Amount Recommended: \$0

Anticipate Time Period: 12/1/2025 – 11/1/2026

MiHIA, in partnership with the Great Lakes Expungement Network (GLEN), proposes a regional expungement initiative targeting nine counties in the Great Lakes Bay Region. The project aims to connect 75 individuals to legal support for criminal record expungement.

Upon review, the committee found the proposal to be duplicative of services already funded in the region. In addition, there is no evidence of active legal partnerships in the service area, and GLEN does not appear to have the organizational infrastructure to manage a grant of this size. The proposal relies heavily on MiHIA as a fiscal sponsor, but MiHIA would not be directly implementing the work.

The committee recommends not funding this request.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND DENIAL OF THE REQUESTED AMOUNT OF \$53,625 AOJ FUNDS TO THE MICHIGAN HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ALLIANCE.