

Michigan State Bar Foundation
Project Grant Committee
Summary of Virtual Meeting: June 1, 2026

Present: Robert F. Riley, Chair; Lori A. Buiteweg, Jehan Crump-Gibson, Hon. Shauna Dunnings, Chad Engelhardt, Reggie Pacis, Dana M. Warnez, Peter H. Webster. Staff Members, Jennifer Bentley and Mary Gladstone-Highland

A total of approximately \$877,500 in current year funds is available for grants through 9/30/2026. The Project Grant Committee is recommending approving grants totaling \$587,925 and denying grants totaling \$501,318.

A. Disability Rights Michigan
Expanding Medicaid Impact Litigation & Advocacy

Amount Requested: \$187,500

Amount Recommended: \$187,500

Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) is the independent, private, nonprofit, and nonpartisan protection and advocacy organization authorized by federal and state law to advocate for and protect the legal rights of people with disabilities in Michigan.

Disability Rights Michigan requests funding to support a new attorney position focused on systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. The project targets gaps in access to behavioral and mental health services and aims to expand statewide impact through litigation and policy reform. Several statewide organizations that serve individuals with disabilities wrote letters supporting this project. This is a time limited project that matches private funding and meets a documented unmet need that is not currently being handled by legal aid grantees.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$187,500 AOJ FUNDS TO DISABILITY RIGHTS MICHIGAN TO MATCH FUNDING AND EXPAND SERVICES TO HELP INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, SPECIFICALLY MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES RECEIVING SERVICES THROUGH THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM.

B. Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw and Livingston Counties
Building Capacity for Restorative Justice Deflection and Diversion Programs with Legal Partners

Amount Requested: \$75,000

Amount Recommended: \$75,000

The Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw & Livingston Counties (DRC) offers affordable, constructive, restorative and healing approaches to conflict resolution for the residents of Washtenaw and Livingston counties.

The Dispute Resolution Center, in partnership with the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center, and The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, request funding to strengthen and expand restorative justice deflection and diversion programs. The project will support development of a structured volunteer management system, cross-center data evaluation, and a coordinated outreach campaign to build capacity for restorative justice services. These efforts aim to increase access to alternatives to traditional legal processes, improve program quality, and expand volunteer engagement across multiple counties. The grant funds a consultant for the project, staffing, and outreach costs for three dispute resolution centers.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$75,000 AOJ FUNDS TO THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER OF WASHTENAW AND LIVINGSTON COUNTIES, PARTNERING WITH THE WAYNE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER AND THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER OF WEST MICHIGAN, TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A ROBUST VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, CROSS CENTER EVALUATION, AND AN OUTREACH CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND AND BUILD CAPACITY FOR THEIR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMS.

C. Michigan Statewide Advocacy Services (MSAS)
Statewide Knowledge Base Project – Phase 1

Amount Requested: \$247,425

Amount Recommended: Up to \$247,425

Michigan Statewide Advocacy Services (MSAS), an annual grantee of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, includes the Michigan Poverty Law Program and Michigan Legal Help.

MSAS requests funding for the first phase of a statewide knowledge base project intended to improve how legal aid organizations access and share information. Currently, legal aid providers rely on multiple uncoordinated sources for legal guidance, templates, and practice materials, resulting in inefficiencies and inconsistencies. This phase will engage a consultant to assess existing resources, identify stakeholder needs, and develop a comprehensive design for a centralized, AI-enabled knowledge base. The project will lay the groundwork for a single, reliable

source of up-to-date legal information to support legal aid attorneys and advocates statewide, ultimately improving the quality and efficiency of services delivered to low-income Michiganders.

MSBF, along with the Counsel and Advocacy Law Line and Michigan Legal Help, have worked with consultants for the past 18 months to assess the triage and referral system in Michigan and implement changes. An additional recommendation was to create a shared knowledge base to support substantive work, intake, triage and referral. This project aligns with that recommendation.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$247,425 AOJ FUNDS TO MICHIGAN STATEWIDE ADVOCACY SERVICES (MSAS) TO ENGAGE A CONSULTANT TO HELP LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A STATEWIDE AI-POWERED KNOWLEDGE BASE THAT WOULD HELP ENSURE ACCURATE, UPDATED INFORMATION FOR LEGAL AID PROGRAMS AND THE TRIAGE SYSTEM.

D. Wayne State University – Center for Behavioral Health and Justice
Standardized AOT Eligibility Guidance Tool for Judges

Amount Requested: \$78,000

Amount Recommended: \$78,000

The Center for Behavioral Health and Justice (CBHJ) is a center within the School of Social Work at Wayne State University. The CBHJ provides local communities, organizations, and behavioral health and law enforcement agencies across Michigan with expertise, evaluation, support, training, and technical assistance to optimize diversion of individuals from jail and prison through the implementation of best and innovative practices at every intercept of the criminal justice continuum.

The Wayne State University Center for Behavioral Health and Justice requests funding to pilot standardized decision-support tools designed to assist probate judges in determining eligibility for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT). The project addresses inconsistency and potential bias in AOT decisions by providing structured guidance based on statutory criteria and expert input. Participating judges will use the tools during AOT hearings while data is collected to evaluate their effectiveness, accuracy, and usability. Findings will inform refinement and potential statewide implementation, with the goal of improving consistency, fairness, and transparency in judicial decision-making for individuals with serious mental illness. The proposal included several letters of support for the pilot and demonstrated potential for broader impact.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF UP TO \$78,000 AOJ FUNDS TO WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY- CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE TO DEVELOP A PILOT PROJECT TO TEST TWO ASSISTED OUTPATIENT TREATMENT (AOT) ELIGIBILITY GUIDANCE TOOLS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING.

E. Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan
Scaling Up Mediation Services (SUMS)

Amount Requested: \$78,000

Amount Recommended: \$0

The Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan (RSCCM) serves Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Isabella, Shiawasee and Gratiot counties. RSCCM provides services to individuals across various income levels by incorporating a sliding fee scale to ensure everyone has equitable access to constructive resolution.

Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan requests funding to expand access to mediation services as an alternative to traditional court processes. The center aims to broaden the range and complexity of cases served, including expanding from simple neighbor disputes to complex public matters.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND DENIAL OF UP TO \$78,000
AOJ FUNDS TO THE RESOLUTION SERVICES CENTER OF CENTRAL MICHIGAN.

F. Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA)
License Recovery Project – Driving Privilege Reinstatement (DPR)

Amount Requested: \$299,318

Amount Recommended: \$0

Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) oversees workforce and human services programs in Wayne and Monroe counties (excluding Detroit). SEMCA leads regional talent development efforts, partnering with community organizations to provide employment, training, and supportive services.

SEMCA has been operating a Driving Privilege Reinstatement (DPR) pilot program and is seeking funding because the funding for the pilot ended in April 2026. SEMCA has not identified alternative funding sources. They would like to transition the pilot program into a full-scale License Recovery Project serving low-income and justice-involved individuals in Wayne and Monroe counties. The project proposes to provide attorney-led legal services to help participants resolve outstanding traffic-related cases, clear warrants, negotiate fines, and restore suspended driver's licenses.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND DENIAL OF UP TO \$299,318
AOJ FUNDS TO SEMCA.

G. Wayne State University Law School Clinic Program

Law and Policing: Community Outreach and Engagement

Amount Requested: \$124,000

Amount Recommended: \$0

Wayne State University Law School requests funding to support a Community Outreach and Engagement Attorney who will lead a Detroit-focused initiative on law enforcement practices and policy engagement. For the past two years, Wayne State has worked with an ABA Post-Graduate Fellow in Legal Education and Police practices and they propose to have that fellow continue and focus on Detroit policing practices. The project's goal is to support more equitable policing practices and work on policy issues. Wayne State has not identified other funders.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO RECOMMEND DENIAL OF UP TO \$124,000
AOJ FUNDS TO WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL CLININC PROGRAM.