July 18, 2016

Senator Ricardo Lara

California State Senate

State Capitol Room 5050

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Assembly Bill 2192 - Support**

Dear Senator Lara,

On behalf of [your organization name], I write to offer our strong support of AB 2192. Reauthorization of the Transcript Reimbursement Fund is crucial to ensuring that low-income litigants receive equal access to justice.

[insert your organizational statement of interest/mission statement]

The Transcript Reimbursement Fund allows for the reimbursement of court transcript costs, both to low-income, self-represented litigants and to legal aid organizations representing low-income clients. For low-income litigants, affording court and deposition transcripts is impossible. For the resource-starved legal aid organizations representing those clients, covering transcript costs is a huge burden. But having a written record of court proceedings is an essential component of access to justice. In cases ranging from saving a low-income tenant from an eviction, to obtaining protection from an abuser, the availability of a court transcript can be outcome determinative.

[insert if you use it, how often, if your pro bono counsel uses it, etc.]

Unless AB2192 is passed, this crucial resource will disappear.

Access to court transcripts is instrumental to litigants both at the trial and appellate court levels. At the trial court level, the absence of a court transcript can mean being denied an effective court order entirely. At the appellate level, preventing low-income litigants from having access to court transcripts effectively precludes review of adverse rulings. In either case, low-income litigants are denied equal justice under the law.

In many family law cases, as well as other civil cases, the trial court may request that the litigant draft an order based on the judge’s ruling from the bench. Without any record of what was said, unrepresented litigants have extreme difficulty reconstructing what occurred, often not understanding it in the first place. This puts them at a huge disadvantage.

Perhaps even more importantly, a written record in the case is crucial to obtaining meaningful review. Some California appellate court justices have flatly refused to review cases in which a low-income litigant is unable to provide a transcript of the proceedings below, even if they couldn’t afford it. Without a written record of their case, the litigant effectively forfeits his or her right to appeal the decision.

The sunset of the Transcript Reimbursement Fund has significant and devastating implications. Please support AB 2192 and preserve this important legislative safeguard of rights.

Sincerely,

[signature block]