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February 19, 2003

TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH GONZALEZ IN SUPPORT OF SB 106

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Elizabeth Gonzalez. I am President of the Board of Clark County Legal Services, a nonprofit organization providing free legal advice and representation to individuals who cannot afford an attorney. We represent abused and neglected children, domestic violence victims, victims of consumer fraud, and others in need of legal help. Each year, we provide free legal classes to over 2,000 individuals in areas of law such as family law, guardianship, bankruptcy, small claims court law, and housing. We also run a pro bono project where we recruit private lawyers to represent those in need; last year, we received 5,000 volunteer hours from lawyers.

Unfortunately, due to limited resources, we turn away individuals who need our help everyday. We represent only 35% of the abused children in our system - and as you all know, each child deserves to have their voice heard. Fraud victims, domestic violence victims and individuals with other problems are likewise turned down to lack of resources.

We know there are no funds in the Legislature's budget to help legal services for those who cannot afford an attorney. Raising the filing fee will provide needed resources. The cost will be borne primarily by litigants who can afford a \$30.00 additional fee. The funds will help the Court and help those in need as well. As a practicing attorney of many years involved in lawsuits involving multiple parties, I know the strain the Court feels from cases involving multiple parties. This legislation targets those cases taxing court resources without being overly burdensome. Because videoconferencing was not available, I am submitting written testimony.

Very truly yours,

GONZALEZ HOWARD & READE, LTD.

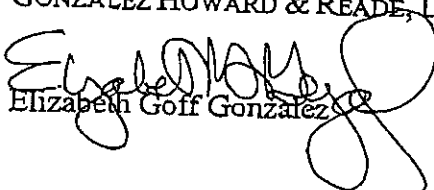
  
Elizabeth Goff Gonzalez

EXHIBIT E Senate Committee on Judiciary

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