



Legislation Text

File #: 1583-2021, **Version:** 1

Legal Aid Society of Columbus has partnered with Councilmember Rob Dorans' office in support of Columbus City Council's effort to simplify the record sealing application process and expand access to legal support services for Columbus residents with a criminal record. Opportunity Port is the name of the proposal submitted by Councilmember Rob Dorans' office in response to the Second Community Challenge issued by The Ohio State University, in partnership with the Alliance for the American Dream. Opportunity Port was awarded funds (Ordinance 3294-2019, Ordinance 1484-2020, and Ordinance 0165-2021) and in accordance with those grant agreements, whereby these funds will be allocated to support legitimate project costs, including the expenses associated with the identification and convening of collaborative partners, co-development of actionable ideas or policies addressing Alliance for the American Dream goals, vetting ideas with key stakeholders/subject matter experts, and managing, developing, testing, and evaluating the Opportunity Port platform, a portion of these funds are being provided to Legal Aid Society of Columbus to support operations integral to the success of Opportunity Port.

FISCAL IMPACT: Funding is available within the general government grant fund, Fund No. 2220.

To authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Legal Aid Society of Columbus in support of the Opportunity Port program; and to authorize an expenditure within the general government grant fund. (\$175,000.00)

WHEREAS, the existence of criminal records hinders the equitable growth and success of Columbus as a whole; and

WHEREAS, according to the Ohio Justice and Policy Center, 1.3 million Ohio jobs are either completely or partially off limits to Ohioans with previous criminal convictions; and

WHEREAS, Ohio Revised Code 2953.32 "Sealing of conviction record or bail forfeiture record," allows eligible offenders to apply to the sentencing court for the sealing of the record of the case that pertains to the conviction; and

WHEREAS, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 1 in 3 American adults has a criminal record; and

WHEREAS, according to the same study, among all individuals with criminal records, communities of color are most affected by incarceration and most disadvantaged by their criminal histories when seeking future employment; and

WHEREAS, the goal of this grant is to support the Opportunity Port project, finalist and award recipient in the Alliance for the American Dream competition; and

WHEREAS, Alliance for the American Dream is a network of communities, each anchored by a public research university, that provides access to capital and access to market for new ideas to support distressed communities locally; and

WHEREAS, The Ohio State University, in partnership with the Alliance for the American Dream, aims to generate innovative ideas to increase economic opportunities for local families; and

WHEREAS, \$175,000.00 in grant funds is being made available to Legal Aid Society of Columbus in support of City Council's effort to simplify the record sealing application process and expand access to legal support services for Columbus residents with a criminal record for a period through December 31, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Legal Aid Society of Columbus is a well-known community resource that provides related services to the public currently, and is an ideal partner for providing record sealing application assistance to residents who are burdened by their criminal records; now, therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the City Clerk is hereby authorized to enter into a grant agreement with the Legal Aid Society of Columbus in support of the Opportunity Port program.

SECTION 2. That the expenditure of \$175,000.00 or so much thereof as may be needed pursuant to the actions authorized in SECTION 1, is hereby authorized per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3. That this ordinance shall take effect at the earliest date allowable under law.