



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 1, 2020

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Free Legal Hotline to Help Western North Carolinians Struggling During the COVID-19 Crisis

Several organizations are joining together to coordinate the **WNC COVID Legal Hotline** on **Thursday, May 21st from 8am to 2pm**. Through this hotline attorneys will offer free legal information and guidance to Western North Carolinians affected by the pandemic. The Buncombe County Bar, Pisgah Legal Services, Legal Aid of NC and the NC Bar Foundation are hosting event.

On May 21st from 8am to 2pm, WNC residents can call the hotline at **828-560-3700** and talk with a lawyer about legal problems related to meeting their basic needs. Lawyers will provide free advice about issues related to housing, bills or debt, unemployment benefits, health insurance, personal safety, stimulus checks, and other matters affecting the health, well-being and financial security of households in our region. Attorneys will also be available to take calls from small business owners and nonprofit leaders facing challenges due to COVID-19. Attorneys can only answer questions based on North Carolina or federal law, so will not be able to assist callers from neighboring out-of-state areas in GA, SC, TN or VA.

John Noor, partner at Roberts & Stevens and Pisgah Legal Services' board member, explains, "Local attorneys are very concerned about our neighbors. We know that there are tens of thousands of families in our region struggling and we want to help in any way we can. Lawyers can be a resource on many different economic and family problems arising in the midst of this pandemic."

Through the WNC COVID Legal Hotline, volunteer attorneys will provide brief legal help to callers and will refer them other resources, if needed. Low-income callers can be referred to Pisgah Legal Services and Legal Aid of NC, nonprofits providing free civil legal aid to lower-income individuals and families across WNC. Pisgah Legal is a regional organization with nine offices in the region, including its main office located in Asheville. Legal Aid of NC is a

statewide organization based in Raleigh and has three offices in WNC. Individuals can call Pisgah Legal for help at 1-800-489-6144 during regular business hours or apply online for assistance anytime at www.pisgahlegal.org. Applications can be made to Legal Aid of NC by calling 1-866-219-5262 or online at www.legalaidnc.org.

Individuals who do not qualify for free services through Pisgah Legal or Legal Aid of NC can call the NC Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-662-7660 for a 30-minute legal consultation for \$50 or seek help with their legal question through NC Free Legal Answers at www.nc.freelegalanswers.org.

Volunteer attorneys and call operators are needed to help with the hotline. Information can be found here: bit.ly/WNChotline.

Since the COVID crisis hit in March, Pisgah Legal Services and Legal Aid of NC have fielded thousands of requests for help related to unemployment benefits, housing problems, consumer fraud, loss of health insurance, custody matters for domestic violence survivors, and many other legal problems. Both of these agencies are gearing up for even greater need for legal help in the coming months as an unprecedented number of WNC residents face eviction, foreclosure, bankruptcy, and other economic crises.

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