As you are aware, we are in a time of high concern for public health due to the corona virus. On April 15, New Orleans Mayor Latoya Cantrell signed a proclamation to continue the “stay home provisions” until May 16. The order prohibits all public and private gatherings. Additionally, the Mayor has strongly suggested that no large groups assemble in the City for the remainder of 2020.

With much disappointment, the Louisiana Bar Foundation Annual Fellows Gala scheduled for Friday, May 15, has been postponed to next year, Spring 2021. The Gala had generated excellent support from the legal community, and we were excited to recognize the 2019 Distinguished Honorees – Hon. Robert H. Morrison III, Marcus V. Brown, Mary Terrell Joseph, John M. Church and Calogero Justice Award recipient Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson. The safety and health of our guests and the larger community is our priority. We believe those interests are best served by postponing the event.

As we work to keep our offices functioning and families safe, we want to update you on current LBF activities and the past year below:

**Staff:** The physical office continues to be closed in accordance with the orders issued by the Governor and the City of New Orleans Mayor. Remote access to the office server and software platforms is working seamlessly so far allowing for staff to handle their day-to-day work responsibilities.

**Grantees:** We partner with a trusted network of more than 70 grantees that are leading community-driven efforts to help families on the ground with their specific challenges. Our goal is to make sure that all Louisianans, regardless of their zip code, background or income level have access to civil legal services that they need.

A survey was sent electronically to identify service disruptions and other COVID 19 impacts. After a review of the responses, we identified several programs that had technology/remote access software needs. I am happy to report that emergency grants were approved to 8 organizations for technology software and/or equipment. In our partnership with Lagniappe Law Lab, ED Amanda Brown shared that the Louisiana LawHelp public, self-help site was the 4th most viewed resource utilized over the past 14 days on COVID 19 related traffic in the entire 22-state network with 10,877 views. The LBF hosts the site and supports the Lab. Amanda Brown continues to help raise the bar in civil legal aid service delivery.

I am very happy to announce that the Board acted to maintain funding levels for the 2020-2021 fiscal year utilizing LBF reserves as necessary. The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 has resulted in many Louisianans facing life-changing challenges who need support from our civil legal aid network. The economic hardship caused by business closures and illness creates conflicts only the civil justice system can resolve, like: missed rent payments leading to eviction notices; disputes over medical and consumer debt; people wrongly denied public benefits that can keep their families afloat; increased incidents of domestic violence due to quarantines; and stay at home orders resulting in custody issues for minor children and an increase in abuse and neglect cases.
**Finances:** We have identified 10 of 15 operating budget income line items that we anticipate will be negatively affected due to COVID-19. IOLTA interest rate decreases were effective April 1 and revenue losses will be realized in May and June remittances. Overall, we anticipate ending the fiscal year slightly under budget. More significant impacts will be reflected in the 2020-21 operating budget to be adopted by the Board in July.

**Communications and Events:** The annual fellows regional events, newly expanded and renamed the LBF Pop Up Tour, has been postponed until late summer/early fall. LBF activities, COVID-19 grantee information and other civil legal aid network resources are being shared with the public, grantees and fellows utilizing social media, the website and blast email.

The Annual Assembly events (Grants Committee meeting, Kids Chance Committee meeting, Board of Directors meeting) scheduled to take place at the Hyatt Regency on May 14-15 will take place via zoom conferencing.

As we’ve seen, change is constant; and it presents great challenges and opportunities. As administrator of the IOLTA Program and civil legal aid funder of Louisiana, we are working to maintain and grow leadership in our evolving justice ecosystem. Maintaining leadership on shifting sands requires both inward-facing work on our organization as well as nurturing and growing the outward facing relationships.

For more than 30 years, the LBF has been a trusted authority and the state’s largest funder of civil legal aid. Our decades of experience as a responsible steward of funds as well as our well-established partnerships across all 64 parishes has allowed us to help hundreds of thousands of Louisiana residents gain access to the legal system.

To remain relevant and better ensure future success and sustainability, the LBF is focused on relationship building; data collection and sharing; developing new funding sources and providing expertise and technical assistance to our grantees. We have made great strides and are leading in three, key areas:

**Technology**

- In 2018 we funded an upgrade to the **statewide case management system** that provides improvements and efficiencies. The system is utilized by the LBF-funded legal service corporations and pro bono projects across the state.
- In 2018, the LBF hired **Tech Consultant** Amanda Brown, a former ABA Tech Fellow, to develop the Louisiana Civil Legal Navigator, an online legal information access portal that uses artificial intelligence and curated experiences to help people diagnose their legal problems and easily access legal aid services.
- In 2019, Amanda launched the **Lagniappe Law Lab** with financial support from the LBF. The Lab is a technology focused non-profit that provides in-house service delivery consulting to civil legal aid organizations, and facilitates the design, development and implementation of new legal aid technology projects. It is also a home for existing technology programs, such as the Civil Legal Navigator. Through a special grant to The Lab, we are continuing our investment in the future of civil legal aid technology.

**Development**

- In 2015 we implemented a track for grantees at the Louisiana Justice Community Conference. Each year, we provide training and speakers who address board governance topics and latest trends.
- The **Philanthropic Community-at-Large Board seat** was added in 2017 to deepen our relationship with community foundations and to enhance our ability to work together on key civil legal aid initiatives.
- The LBF created a partnership with **Louisiana Appleseed** to engage grantees for the identification of systemic issues impacting the client base. In addition, Appleseed works in collaboration with the ATJ Commission Funding Committee to lead on all legislative efforts which include funding and legislative changes benefitting the civil legal aid network.
Through the **Collaborative Grants Workgroup**, the Development Department provides direct staff support and fiscal administration to the legal aid providers on collaborative grant opportunities with national funders and federal and state governments.

Language has been included in the grant agreement to engage grantees in LBF efforts including board training, statewide fundraising, and education and awareness efforts.

Most recently, unfortunately, we launched the **LBF Emergency Legal Aid Fund** to support our grantees work to assist the many Louisianans facing life-changing challenges that only the civil justice system can resolve.

**Communications**

- We recently engaged **Spitfire Strategies** to help us increase the visibility and understanding of the need for basic civil legal aid services for those who cannot afford them. Spitfire has a long history of working with advocacy organizations and foundations and brings decades of policy, nonprofit and foundation leadership experience and insight; together, we plan to spark change for the entire Louisiana civil legal aid network.

- The LBF’s online presence is essential to increasing awareness, providing information and resources. The **website** was completely redesigned with a clean, modern look and we have incorporated **social media** as a means of keeping our Fellows, grantees, and the public up to date on the civil legal aid work being done across the state.

- The LBF funds an **Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment Analysis** to illustrate the positive, economic consequences to the state that flow from funding for civil legal aid. The 2018 study showed that for every $1 invested in Louisiana’s civil legal aid services, these programs deliver $9.13 in immediate and long-term financial benefits. The 2020 study will launch this fall.

- The LBF hosted **Civil Legal Aid Strategic Communications Training** presented by **Voices for Civil Justice**. The training was designed to help Access to Justice Commission partners gain the tools needed for consistent messaging for our civil legal aid network.

- The **LBF one hour, professionalism CLE** is a PowerPoint presentation that provides information on civil legal aid and explains Why the LBF is Good for the Profession.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. I am proud to be a member of an organization directly impacting the legal profession and the community at large. I have truly enjoyed working to raise civil legal aid awareness and education to benefit our legal aid network. Thank you to the LBF staff, the executive committee, the board of directors and our many volunteers for your leadership, dedication and service.