

## Justice & Diversity Center Participates in New Coalition to Help Bring Voices of Low-Income Consumers to the Capitol

**May 18, 2017 -- San Francisco --** The voice of low-income Californians in the Capitol just got a little louder.

The California Low-Income Consumer Coalition (CLICC), launched this year, is already at work keeping the interests of low-income consumers front and center in policy debates in Sacramento. When legislators are debating bills that would change debt collection practices in the state, would make it easier to offer predatory payday loans, or would remove safeguards on used car sales, they hear from industry and other “experts” – but too often they don’t hear from the people the laws would actually affect.

That’s about to change. Eleven legal services and advocacy groups from across the state have come together to speak as one on behalf of those vulnerable Californians.

According to Ted Mermin, CLICC’s founder, low-income Californians are too often left out of discussions that will directly affect their financial well-being. “Poor people get plenty of attention from predatory lenders,” Mermin says, “but not enough from the legislature.”

That’s why CLICC has turned to established public interest lobbyist Jith Meganathan to lead its advocacy work in the Capitol. Meganathan worked for five years on behalf of low-income consumers at Central California Legal Services in the heart of the Central Valley before joining the Western Center on Law & Poverty, where he continues to represent low-income tenants on housing policy.

CLICC’s members have had some notable legislative successes in recent years, including the Fair Debt Buying Practices Act, laws easing wage garnishment and default judgments, and last year’s AB2819 (Chiu), which relieved tenants of the burden of having an eviction proceeding show up on their credit reports even if they won the case, unless that victory was officially entered within 60 days of receiving the eviction notice. Informal coalitions helped get those bills through. Now those groups are making it formal.

Meganathan praises the Coalition. “This is a dedicated group of legal services organizations from all around the state,” he says, “and I could not be prouder to represent them in the Capitol.”

Mairi McKeever, Director and Managing Attorney of JDC’s Pro Bono Legal Services Programs is excited about the Coalition, “JDC’s collaboration with CLICC allows us to translate what we see in our front-line representation cases into long-term solutions for our client community.”

In addition to JDC, the Coalition members include Bet Tzedek Legal Services and Public Counsel in Los Angeles, the East

## **Justice & Diversity Center Participates in New Coalition to Help Bring Voices of Low-Income Consumers to the Capitol (continued)**

Bay Community Law Center in Berkeley, the Public Law Center in Orange County, Riverside Legal Aid, the Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino, Watsonville Legal Aid, the Center for Responsible Lending in Oakland, Law Foundation of Silicon Valley in San Jose, and Centro Legal de la Raza.

Learn more about CLICC: [www.lowincomeconsumers.org](http://www.lowincomeconsumers.org).

For more information about JDC's Legal Services Programs, visit [www.sfbar.org/jdc](http://www.sfbar.org/jdc).

###

The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) is a nonprofit voluntary membership organization of attorneys, law students, and legal professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 1872, BASF enjoys the support of more than 7,300 individuals, law firms, corporate legal departments, and law schools. Through its board of directors, its committees, and its volunteer legal services programs and other community efforts, BASF has worked actively to promote and achieve equal justice for all and oppose discrimination in all its forms, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, sex, disability, and sexual orientation. BASF provides a collective voice for public advocacy, advances professional growth and education, and attempts to elevate the standards of integrity, honor, and respect in the practice of law.

The Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) advances fairness and equality by providing pro bono legal services to low-income people and educational programs that foster diversity in the legal profession. JDC is the largest legal services providers in San Francisco. JDC's primary purpose is the delivery of free legal services to low-income San Franciscans, as well as the non-profits that serve them. JDC delivers free legal services through its Legal Services Programs division, which consists of the Pro Bono Legal Services Program, Homeless Advocacy Project, and the Immigration Program. JDC provides enrichment programs to diverse youth and young adults through its Diversity Educational Programs. JDC's programs serve approximately 9,500 disadvantaged San Franciscans a year, with the overarching goal of assisting the community's most vulnerable members with accessing the judicial system and strengthening their personal, professional, and economic security.