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Rita M. Lowey
Congress of the United States
18th District, New York

November 21, 2003

The Honorable Jose Serrano
U. S. Representative
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Serrano:

I greatly appreciate your efforts to secure additional funding for the Legal Services Corporation in the 2004 Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (CJS). You know as well as any of us the importance of providing affordable legal services to our country's most needy.

I write today because, like you, I am increasingly concerned about an unfair and unnecessary provision in the CJS Appropriations bill that restricts the use of private and other non-federal funds by independent legal services providers funded in part by LSC. This "private money restriction" encumbers more than \$300 million annually in non-federal funds – money that could be used to provide critical legal assistance to our society's most vulnerable individuals and families. The private money restriction burdens independent legal service providers with unwarranted costs; it impedes private charitable initiatives; and it undermines our Nation's promise of equal justice for all.

It is my hope that the Committee on Appropriations will revisit the private money restriction when it considers the 2005 CJS Appropriations bill. I urge you to continue your leadership on behalf of America's families by guiding efforts in your Subcommittee to end this unfairness.

Sincerely,

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress