



**ERLS**  
EAST RIVER LEGAL SERVICES

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June 30, 2025

Commission for Equal Access to the Courts

Re: July 2025 Award

Greetings:

Unfortunately, East River Legal Services (ERLS) is unable to jointly recommend a division of the Commission for Equal Access to the Courts (CEAC) award, due to concerns about Dakota Plains Legal Services (DPLS). While we are pleased to learn that the DPLS Board hired an Interim Executive Director, ERLS has ongoing concerns and does not have the information needed to support a financial award to DPLS.

ERLS supports the creation of one statewide civil legal aid program that includes need-based legal services for Native Americans in State and Tribal Court. In June 2025, ERLS applied for 2026 Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding for Service Area SD-2 (ERLS' current service area). Additionally, after approval by the ERLS Board, ERLS submitted grant applications with the LSC for the additional service areas of SD-4 (Western South Dakota) and NSD-1 (Native American services). ERLS has no intention of competing with DPLS for criminal defense appointments or contracts. LSC Staff are visiting both DPLS and ERLS in August 2025 as part of the 2026 grant application review.

Despite our concerns, ERLS is open to the idea of collaboration with DPLS.

Sincerely,

Lea Wroblewski  
Executive Director