Empire Justice Center strongly supports this legislation that would require the state to register contracts with not-for-profit agencies within 30-days of the start date of the contract. The bill requires state agencies to register contract renewals with not-for-profit organizations within 30-days of the start date of the renewed contract. Lastly, the measure clarifies the definition of “registered contract” to mean a contract signed by the state agency, countersigned by the not-for-profit entity, and sent to the Attorney General’s Office for approval.

The pressures of rising inflation are also being felt deeply by our organization, which has a direct affect on our ability to serve clients. It is increasingly difficult for our sector to recruit and retain staff when budgets are uncertain and without consistent cost of living adjustments built into state contracts. These delays directly impact our ability support our staff via salary increases for current staff and hampering our ability to be competitive with salaries to recruit attorneys, paralegals, and other vital staff. In turn, these factors complicate our ability to maintain robust service levels for our clients, who are often in crisis and can’t wait weeks or months for assistance. For example, if new funding was provided to organizations to hire new eviction defense staff, but a contract is delayed by six months, a provider may not be able to hire and front the salary cost in that period, or if available, use a line or credit or take out a loan from their bank to do so. During that time, the organization is either turning away dozens of tenants in need of assistance or racking up interest costs that will never be reimbursed by the state and will have to be paid in some other way. For a variety of reasons, many of our providers operate on a tight margin, making either prospect deeply problematic.

This legislation would go a long way to help provide our community and the greater human services non-profit sector with reassurance when budgeting. These modest changes will directly allow community-based organizations to provide state contracted services more seamlessly to our most vulnerable, and better plan for growth and enhancement in services.

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