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The Florida Supreme Court  
500 South Duval Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1927

Re: Proposed Amendment to Rule 1-7.3(a) of the Rules Regulating the Florida Bar

To the Honorable Members of the Florida Supreme Court:

I write in support of the proposal to increase dues because the vagaries of the IOTA program threaten our system of civil legal aid, and because regular funding based on dues is both fair and sensible. Those without the means to hire attorney are unquestionably disadvantaged in our courts. Civil legal aid is one of the only palliatives we offer for what would otherwise be an unabashedly two tiered justice system and that is worth safeguarding. Furthermore, Florida's lawyers have a responsibility to ensure the financial health of legal aid because we benefit financially from its existence. Every attorney who has received a client through a referral from a legal aid office, or who has defended a case which would not have been brought but for the initiative of a legal aid attorney, owes a debt to our system of civil legal aid. With the precipitous decline in funding from the IOTA program the time has come to repay that debt.

Anecdotally, I feel deeply thankful for the existence of legal aid. As a law student at the University of Florida's Levin College of Law I spent several years working with Three Rivers Legal Services in Columbia County. My experience provided me with invaluable legal knowledge as well as patience, calm and empathy which have been of enduring value to my practice. Equally important I gained a sense of perspective, in that I know that helping someone to escape the grinding reality of poverty is not an act of charity, but the realization of justice.

Finally, as an individual I cannot contribute enough to meaningfully protect the state wide provision of civil legal aid and that is why collective action in the form of increased bar dues is essential. All lawyers benefit from legal aid. Many benefit from referrals for fee generating cases such as claims under the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act. Others benefit from an increase in billable hours for defending cases brought by legal aid attorneys. Still others who may not see tangible benefits nonetheless are enriched because legal aid offices improve access to justice and provide a needed measure of fairness in our society.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Patrick Crotty

Florida Bar Number: 0108541

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on August 8, 2014, I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court using the Supreme Court of Florida E-Filing Portal. I also certify that the foregoing document is being served this date via email on those counsel or parties below:

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By: /s/ Patrick C. Crotty  
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