



Bill Number:	W-24-02	Sponsored By:	Senator Sophia Bates
Introduced On:	March 14th, 2024		
Voted On:	March 21st, 2024		
Result:	Passed		
Vote Count:	28-0-0		

A BILL TO: Create a Student Legal Services Department on Grand Valley State University's Allendale Campus.

Recognizing, Grand Valley State University does not currently have a department that offers legal advice, legal representation, or provides legal services to students on campus;¹ and

Whereas, most GVSU students, therefore, do not have access to any legal services or have anywhere to go for legal advice, and if a Student Legal Services department were provided to GVSU students, they would be able to focus more on school and less on personal legal matters; and

Recognizing, 85% of students expressed in a survey that they would be interested in GVSU offering a free, confidential lawyer for advisory on legal matters (such as landlord/tenant disputes, traffic violations, family law matters, immigration concerns, criminal matters, consumer-protection issues, etc.);² and

Recognizing, 65% of students expressed in a survey that they would support GVSU imposing a small semesterly fee for this service;³ and

Whereas, after researching and consulting with a variety of universities including Stephanie Allen at Wright State University, Douglas Lewis at the University of Michigan, Mark Karon at the University of Minnesota, and Rodney Flemming at Bowling Green State University, there are a variety of models that a Student Legal Services program can follow; and

¹ <https://www.gvsu.edu/>

² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QcDmK6zAoAm4dtu6w1bDGZgRg0ecR5D8/view?usp=drive_link

³ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QcDmK6zAoAm4dtu6w1bDGZgRg0ecR5D8/view?usp=drive_link

Recognizing, Wright State University Student Legal Services, affiliated with the Student Legal Services Inc., provides legal advice, legal representation, legal education, and legal resources regarding various areas of law including but not limited to; family law, estate planning, notary services, landlord-tenant law, traffic law, and criminal misdemeanors;⁴ and

Recognizing, Wright State University Student Legal Services employs two full-time attorneys, a full-time paralegal, and a variety of undergraduate students to directly aid in the average of 1,000 legal inquiries per academic year among the average of 7,650 students opted-in to the program;⁵ and

Recognizing, Wright State University charges each student an automatically opted-in \$16.00 fee per semester to have access to the Student Legal Services, where students can opt-out;⁶ and

Recognizing, Wright State University has seen a range of 83%-91% of students stay opted-in for this fee, which reveals a utilization rate of 12.46%;⁷ and

Recognizing, other universities such as the University of Michigan Student Legal Services, as employed by the University of Michigan, provide legal counsel, legal representation, assistance with appeals, and legal education, regarding various areas of law including but not limited to; landlord-tenant law, criminal defense, family law, and consumer law;⁸ and

Recognizing, the University of Michigan Student Legal Services employs five attorneys, one paralegal, and one office/managerial secretary to directly aid in the average of 4,500 legal inquiries per academic year among the average 52,000 students eligible for the Student Legal Services program;⁹ and

⁴ Allen, Stephanie, Wright State University Student Legal Services Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 22 Feb. 2024.

⁵ Allen, Stephanie, Wright State University Student Legal Services Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 22 Feb. 2024.

⁶ Allen, Stephanie, Wright State University Student Legal Services Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 22 Feb. 2024.

⁷ Allen, Stephanie, Wright State University Student Legal Services Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 22 Feb. 2024.

⁸ Lewis, Douglas, University of Michigan Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Zoom Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 26 Feb. 2024.

⁹ Lewis, Douglas, University of Michigan Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Zoom Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 26 Feb. 2024.

Recognizing, the University of Michigan charges each of the average 52,000 students a mandatory \$8.50 fee per registered semester to have access to the Student Legal Services, which reveals a utilization rate of 8.65%;¹⁰ and

Recognizing, the University of Michigan Student Legal Services has participated in cooperative engagement with the university including help with crisis management, counseling and psychological needs, and student conflict resolutions, and that every time students have voted upon the mandatory fee, it has always passed;¹¹ and

Recognizing, other universities such as the University of Minnesota Student Legal Services, affiliated with the National Student Legal Services Inc., provide legal advice, legal representation, legal education, and legal resources regarding various areas of law including but not limited to; landlord-tenant law, estate planning, traffic law, and criminal misdemeanors;¹² and

Recognizing, the University of Minnesota Student Legal Services employs six full-time attorneys, two paralegals, one office manager, two student administrative staff, and one in-take coordinator to directly aid in the average of 5,100 legal inquiries per academic year among the average 60,000 students eligible for the Student Legal Services program;¹³ and

Recognizing, the University of Minnesota charges each student who is taking 6 credits or more a mandatory \$14.83 fee per semester to have access to the Student Legal Services, which reveals a utilization rate of 8.5%;¹⁴ and

Whereas, among these other universities researched, their respective Student Legal Services departments see a utilization range of 8.5% - 12.46%, which allows for the department to be self-sustaining and cost-effective, while also indicating a clear need for these services on their respective campuses; and

¹⁰ Lewis, Douglas, University of Michigan Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Zoom Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 26 Feb. 2024.

¹¹ Lewis, Douglas, University of Michigan Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Zoom Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 26 Feb. 2024.

¹² Karon, Mark, University of Minnesota Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 27 Feb. 2024.

¹³ Karon, Mark, University of Minnesota Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 27 Feb. 2024.

¹⁴ Karon, Mark, University of Minnesota Student Legal Services Director and Attorney. Phone Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 27 Feb. 2024.

Recognizing, the University of Minnesota has a population of 60,000 students who pay a semesterly fee of \$14.83 and Wright State University has a population of 7,650 students who pay a semesterly fee of \$16.00; and

Whereas, based on Grand Valley State University's population of 22,269, GVSU students would likely pay an amount between University of Michigan's \$8.50 semesterly fee and Wright State University's \$16.00 semesterly fee;¹⁵ and

Recognizing, there is a need for a Student Legal Services department at Grand Valley State University, with 2% of first-year students living off campus during the 2023-2024 school year, and with most GVSU students living off campus at some point during their college career;¹⁶ and

Whereas, an attorney providing advice on landlord/tenant issues would make leasing off-campus a more comfortable and feasible option since most students are likely not to experience signing a lease until they need to live off campus during their college career; and

Whereas, the GVSU student body would benefit from the attorneys in a potential GVSU Student Legal Services becoming well-versed in the areas of law where students have the most legal needs; and

Whereas, the GVSU student body would benefit from the potential relationships that could be formed between local landlords, law enforcement, and court systems; and

Recognizing, an additional benefit to the GVSU student body would be the creation of work opportunities for student interns and employees, since 33% of undergraduate majors require internship participation in order to graduate, such as Legal Studies major students who must complete 200 hours of documented work at a pre-approved internship location;^{17,18} and

Whereas, GVSU students would benefit from not only reasonably priced legal advice, representation, education, and resources, but also from exposure to various areas of law in a nurturing environment through an internship or employment opportunity; and

Whereas, a GVSU Student Legal Services would allow attorneys to have the opportunity to conduct various lectures, workshops, and seminars on campus each year; and

¹⁵ <https://www.gvsu.edu/about.htm>

¹⁶ Bench, Mason, GVSU Housing and Residence Life Staff. Email Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 28 Feb. 2024.

¹⁷ https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/F13F3B61-DB70-56AE-D4F80B23E630AE5F/ls_student_internship_info_handout_rev_1.pdf

¹⁸ Becklin, Rachel, GVSU Career Center Staff. Email Interview. Conducted by Senator Bates, 28 Feb. 2024.

Whereas, by aiding students in their understanding of the law, and informing students of their rights and responsibilities as a citizen, this program could help educate on and prevent students from engaging in illegal misconduct; and,

Therefore, Let it Be Resolved, that the Grand Valley State University Student Senate, acting on behalf of the student body, requests that the University create a Student Legal Services department to advise, represent, educate, and provide legal resources for students; and,

Furthermore, Let it Be Resolved, that the Grand Valley State University Student Senate, acting on behalf of the student body, requests that the Vice President of Student Affairs, Jenny Hall-Jones, form a task force consisting of student senators and faculty, to further research the Student Legal Services programs of other universities before creating our own, and to provide updates during and after the formation of a Student Legal Services department.