Memphis Area Legal Services (MALS) is launching its “We’re All In” campaign targeting legal professionals with a goal of increasing private donations and decreasing the organization’s government dependence.

MALS helps more than 12,000 people annually, but with government funding down by 18 percent this year and trending toward even more significant decreases, the organization’s budget could come down over $500,000 by 2014. That translates to turning away 8,400 people in need of legal services, and MALS already has to turn away 66 percent of applicants because of lack of funding.

MALS was founded by a group of 30 lawyers in 1968 in conjunction with the Neighborhood Legal Service Project with the goal of supplying honest legal representation for all, not just the well-to-do. The organization helps people better understand and navigate a convoluted system and often addresses the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of the population such as children, seniors, single moms, and the disabled.

The “We’re All In” campaign is crucial to making sure those in need have access to legal aid that MALS provides. Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Janice Holder and Harrison McIver, current Executive Director and CEO of MALS, are calling on the legal community, business community, and private citizens for help, whether it’s lending time and talent or providing money and other resources.

McIver says, “This is a community-wide issue and we can’t thrive without community-wide support, not just [from] other lawyers but everyone who has a vested interest in a fair and equitable legal system. Even the smallest of injustices affects every single one of us. The people we serve are your friends, your neighbors, your relatives, your church members. Or, it could be any one of us at any given time.”

For more information about how you can get involved visit www.malsi.org or to make a donation go to donations.malsi.org.