

# MLAC requests \$26 million for civil legal aid in FY20

FY19 Appropriation: \$21.04 million | FY20 Request: \$26 million

FY20 Recommendations - Governor: \$21 million

Line Item  
0321-1600

mlac.org



## Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

MLAC's appropriation funds general support to civil legal aid programs as well as grants for legal assistance to domestic violence victims and Massachusetts residents eligible for federal disability benefits and Medicare.

### LEGAL AID ELIGIBILITY

INCOME AT OR BELOW 125% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (\$32,188/YEAR FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR)

### CIVIL LEGAL AID PROGRAMS PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WITH ISSUES RELATED TO:

- ▶ HOUSING
- ▶ HEALTH CARE
- ▶ IMMIGRATION
- ▶ EMPLOYMENT
- ▶ EDUCATION
- ▶ FAMILY LAW & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- ▶ DISABILITY BENEFITS
- ▶ CONSUMER LAW
- ▶ PROTECTION OF ELDERS



**MLAC-funded programs closed 22,239 cases in FY18, benefiting over 95,000 clients and family members in Massachusetts.**

**VITAL SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES.** Our clients often face complex civil legal issues, where one problem can negatively affect housing, health care, education, and/or employment. It is essential for the well-being of individuals and families and for the fiscal health of the Commonwealth to resolve these issues before they become crises.

**A SMART INVESTMENT.** In FY18, the work of the 14 MLAC-funded civil legal aid programs provided an economic benefit of \$60.5 million, saving the state money on emergency costs and returning money to the state and its residents to be reinvested in local economies.

**RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS.** Changing federal policies—especially those related to immigration and public benefits—increase civil legal needs and put vulnerable populations under constant threat and without accurate information about their rights. Legal aid attorneys are uniquely qualified to address these concerns, using their expertise to educate clients and the public about complicated law and policy changes.

**EQUAL JUSTICE.** Civil legal aid is essential to a fair and efficient justice system for all people, regardless of income.

**Due to lack of funding, legal aid programs in Massachusetts are forced to turn away 65 percent of eligible residents—nearly 45,000 people each year—who seek help.**

*“It’s so important to have help from someone who knows the law.”*

- Florynce

Watertown resident who faced eviction and was able to access low-income senior housing with help from MetroWest Legal Services

Civil legal aid programs work creatively and collaboratively to serve as many people as possible. More funding is needed so that programs can recover from persistent funding shortages, work to address complex and serious emerging issues, and continue the crucial day-to-day work they have been doing in their communities for decades.

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation was established by the state legislature in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical, noncriminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation.

Lynne Parker  
MLAC  
lparker@mlac.org  
617-391-5640

Elaine O'Reilly | Mary Ann Walsh  
Governmental Strategies  
eoreilly@governmentalstrategies.com | 617-447-5174  
mawalsh@governmentalstrategies.com | 617-447-3711

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