

Talking to your legislator about civil legal aid funding

Talking to Your Legislator

- Introduce yourself as a constituent and as an advocate for civil legal aid
- State that civil legal aid services are important to you and thank your legislator for his or her past support
- Tell your legislator that civil legal aid is in crisis and strongly urge him or her to request \$25 million in funding for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in FY16
- Ask your legislator to make this funding request one of his or her top three budget priorities.

Supporting Facts & Information

- Civil legal aid helps ensure fairness for all in the justice system, regardless of how much money you make.
- Lack of legal assistance for residents costs the state money, hurts the court system and denies the basic right of access to justice. It affects us all.
- Lack of funding means that legal representation in civil cases is out of reach for most low-income people who need it. 64 percent of eligible clients in Massachusetts who seek civil legal aid services are turned away due to lack of funding.
- Legal aid programs provide critical support in housing, employment, and domestic violence cases, among others, helping people maintain safe, stable, and healthy lives.
- The economic benefits of funding civil legal aid far outweigh the costs. Every dollar invested in legal aid returns \$2-\$5 to the state through added federal benefits and savings on costs for services such as emergency shelter, health care and law enforcement.
- Lack of legal representation hinders the courts' ability to ensure equal justice for litigants attempting to represent themselves—and slows the functioning of the court system for everyone.



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