

## Legal Aid and the New Administration

Legal aid programs and clients brace for unprecedented challenges

**In a two-pronged attack**, the new administration in Washington is reportedly poised to take an axe to the programs, protections and rights of the poor and elderly in Massachusetts.

The administration is recommending elimination of key federal programs that fund legal aid to the poor and elderly.

### AND

The administration is pushing policies that will dramatically increase the need for legal aid to the poor and elderly.



**In Fiscal Year 2016, Massachusetts legal aid programs closed cases for more than 23,000 residents, and had to turn away more than twice that number!**

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### **\$10+ Million in Federal Funding at Risk**

More than \$10 million in federal funding comes into Massachusetts to fund civil legal aid to the poor and elderly. All is at risk of elimination under the new administration in Washington. This funding represents approximately 21% of all legal aid funding in Massachusetts.

### **Programs Already Facing Overwhelming Demand**

For no other reason than lack of funding, legal aid programs across Massachusetts already turn away 64% of the low-income and elderly clients who seek help. Elimination of federal funding with nothing to replace it will only make those numbers worse.

### **Legal Needs of the Poor and Elderly Will Increase**

If the new administration in Washington carries out cutbacks to the programs, protections and rights of the poor and elderly, legal aid programs in Massachusetts can expect a flood of people desperate for help with:

- Prevention of eviction, foreclosure, and homelessness, as well as access to shelter and affordable housing. Legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 7,800 such cases in FY16.
- Safety from domestic violence. In FY16 legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 2,500 family law cases, most on behalf of victims of domestic abuse.
- Protecting health care in the face of threatened elimination of the Affordable Care Act. According to the Congressional Budget Office, 18 million people stand to lose their insurance in the first year if the ACA is repealed. In FY16 legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 790 health cases.
- Ensuring the right to live, contribute, and pursue happiness in the United States. Legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed almost 1,900 immigration cases in FY16, and the number of calls for help has sharply increased in the last few months.
- The termination, reduction or denial of public subsistence benefits for the poor and elderly. These programs are complex and often require an attorney to resolve. Legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 3,600 such cases in FY16.
- Qualifying for unemployment benefits. In FY16 legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 400 employment cases.
- Consumer matters such as bankruptcy, debt collection defense and unfair debt collection matters. In FY16 legal aid programs in Massachusetts closed over 800 such cases.