

Investing in Impact: \$5 million increase for civil legal aid in FY 18

Civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts face a funding shortage that forces them to turn away 65 percent of eligible clients who seek services.

To address this crisis, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC, Line Item 0321-1600) is requesting a \$5 million increase in state funding for civil legal aid in the FY18 budget.

\$5 million
funding increase

Civil legal aid
programs
can hire

26 & **12**
attorneys support staff

Allowing
programs to
open

4,000
more cases

helping
an
additional

10,300
low-income
individuals

www.mlac.org

Additional funding will enable civil legal aid programs to expand their **housing, domestic violence, immigration, education, employment, and elder law** work and serve more low-income people in need.

Examples include:

Community Legal Aid, serving Central and Western Massachusetts, could hire eight attorneys to work on education, employment and immigration cases in underserved areas. CLA could also open a consumer law unit to protect elders and other vulnerable populations from financial fraud and abuse.

Greater Boston Legal Services could hire attorneys to take on 1,000 new cases, helping thousands of low-income people access basic necessities such as housing, health care, and food.

The Disability Law Center could hire additional staff to monitor for abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities who live in private psychiatric facilities, state-run psychiatric hospitals, and thousands of group homes across the state. DLC is the only organization of its kind in the state.

Additional funding will also allow for **investments in systemic advocacy**, enabling civil legal aid programs to use legal action, education and advocacy to address public and institutional policies and procedures that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, create barriers to opportunity, and cause economic instability. **Systemic advocacy creates lasting change and has the potential to impact all of the nearly one million people in the state who are eligible for civil legal aid** (income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$30,750 a year for a family of four).

With additional funding, MLAC-funded programs can also make important, **long-term enhancements in infrastructure** to better serve clients, including improving case management and online intake systems to streamline services and help more clients, as well as upgrading websites to make important resources and information easily accessible. These efforts exemplify the commitment of legal aid programs to make practical and efficient use of public funds to help as many individuals as possible.

MLAC-funded Civil Legal Aid Programs

Center for Law and Education | Center for Public Representation | Children's Law Center of Massachusetts | Community Legal Aid | Community Legal Services and Counseling Center | Disability Law Center | Greater Boston Legal Services | Massachusetts Advocates for Children | Massachusetts Law Reform Institute | MetroWest Legal Services | National Consumer Law Center | Northeast Legal Aid | Prisoners' Legal Services | South Coastal Counties Legal Services