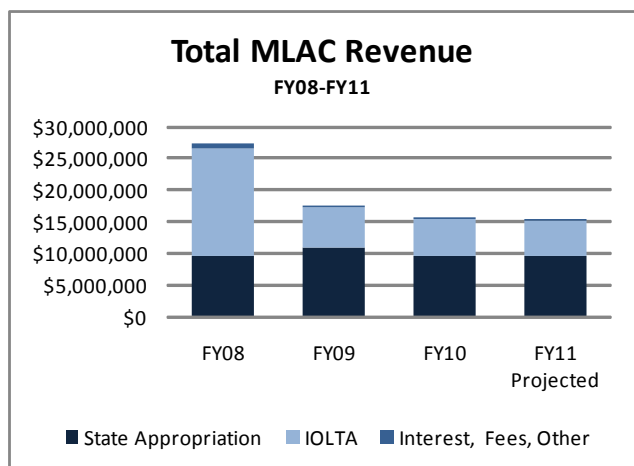


Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Line item 0321-1600

FY09 Appropriation	FY10 Appropriation	FY11 Appropriation	FY12 Governor	FY12 House	FY12 Senate
\$11,070,424	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000

The appropriation funds general support grants for legal aid programs as well as three special projects: the **Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project**, the **Disability Benefits Project**, and the **Medicare Advocacy Project**.



The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) has cut grants to the legal aid programs it funds by **55%** since FY08, due to a cut in the state appropriation and a dramatic and sustained decline in IOLTA* funds. To maintain essential services for low-income residents with the most critical legal needs, **MLAC requests level funding of \$9.5 million in FY12.**

Low-income Massachusetts residents are being denied the legal help they desperately need.

- The number of legal aid attorneys at MLAC-funded programs has **dropped nearly 25%**, and more layoffs of attorneys, paralegals and other staff are in progress. Programs also have instituted furloughs, reduced office hours and cut salaries.
- Families continue to slip into poverty, often for the first time. The number of those eligible for legal aid **grew by 91,000** between 2007 and 2009.
- Legal aid programs are often the last resort for low-income people when they are confronted with complex civil legal problems such as domestic violence, eviction due to foreclosure and unemployment appeals.

Civil legal aid is a sound investment for the Commonwealth.

- **Legal aid programs bring millions in federal revenue into the Commonwealth each year.**
- Legal aid programs save state taxpayer dollars from being spent on expensive social services like the emergency shelter system.

* Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) are set up by attorneys to hold short-term or modest client funds. Interest from these accounts funds access to justice initiatives and civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts.

About MLAC

The Legislature established MLAC in 1983 to provide support and leadership for civil legal aid. MLAC makes grants to local and statewide legal aid programs to help clients with housing, domestic violence, child custody and support, health care, disability benefits, elder abuse, and other non-criminal legal problems. Eligibility for legal aid is set at 125 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$537 per week for a family of four. For more information visit <http://www.mlac.org>.

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