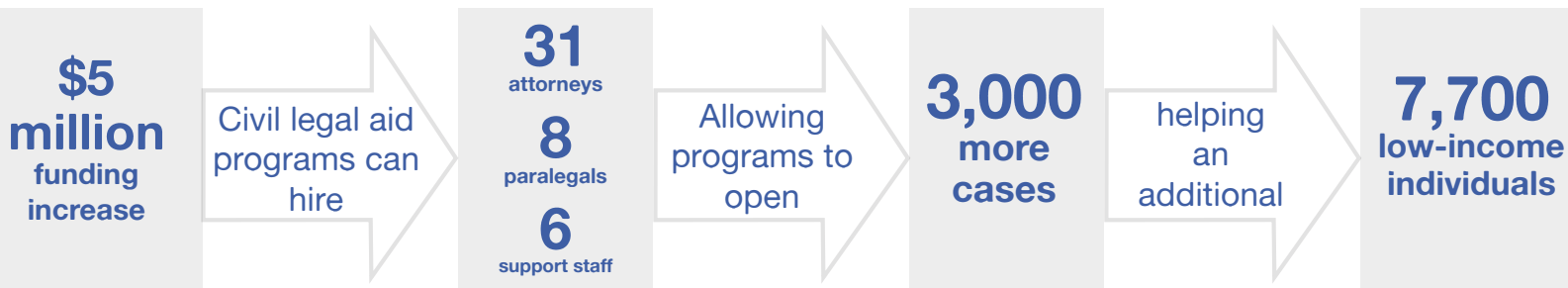


Investing in Impact: \$5 million increase for civil legal aid in FY 19

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 FY19 budget.



Additional funding will enable civil legal aid programs to expand their **education, disability, consumer, housing, elder law**, and other work and serve more low-income people (those with income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$31,375 a year for a family of four). For example:

Northeast Legal Aid could use additional funds to support two attorneys working to help low-income small-business owners overcome legal barriers through its Community Development & Entrepreneurship Practice. NLA could also hire a housing attorney, an elder law attorney, and a bilingual paralegal.

Community Legal Aid, serving Central and Western Massachusetts, could add two education law attorneys, two attorneys focused on veterans' issues, and two attorneys to help formerly incarcerated individuals find employment and housing.

South Coastal Counties Legal Services could hire additional education and employment attorneys and move forward with plans to re-open its New Bedford office, providing access to legal help in a low-income, high-need community.

Additional funding will also allow for **investments in systemic advocacy**, enabling civil legal aid programs to use education, advocacy, and legal action to address public and institutional policies and procedures that create barriers to opportunity and cause economic instability. For example, the **Massachusetts Law Reform Institute** could spearhead advocacy efforts to improve economic security for older adults, including food security and housing, as well as challenges faced by elders raising grandchildren due to the opioid crisis.

With additional funding, MLAC-funded programs can also make **enhancements in infrastructure** to better serve clients, including improving case management and online intake systems to streamline services and help more clients. These efforts exemplify the commitment of legal aid programs to make practical, 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