

via hand delivery

November 29, 2017

Governor Charles D. Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House Room 280
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Re: Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, line item 0321-1600
FY19 budget request of \$23 million

Dear Governor Baker,

Thank you for providing level funding of \$18 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in the FY18 budget. As presidents of the Massachusetts Bar Association and affiliated bar associations across the state, we ask that you include a \$5 million increase for civil legal aid through the MLAC line item, 0321-1600, in your FY19 Budget Recommendations.

Our associations are committed to ensuring access to our courts when needed by all residents, including those who cannot afford to hire an attorney. Low-income people are frequently the ones who need legal assistance the most to address serious legal issues that threaten their security and that of their families.

Many members of our associations devote countless hours to providing *pro bono* counsel and representation to civil litigants, yet all of our donated time is not nearly enough to meet the needs of the estimated 65% of eligible residents, 57,000 people last year, that seek help from a civil legal aid program and are turned away due to inadequate program funding. Eligible residents must have incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level—or \$30,750 annually—for a family of four. Despite our best efforts to supplement the work of legal aid programs, a substantial unmet need for help with domestic violence, housing, employment, immigration, and other civil legal issues persists.

The economic benefits of investing in legal aid are clear. MLAC received \$17 million from the state in FY16, and the work of MLAC-funded programs that year generated \$49.3 million to the Commonwealth and its residents in savings on costly social services, new federal revenue, and additional financial support for low-income clients. A \$5 million increase in FY19 funding would boost the economy while enabling legal aid programs to efficiently and effectively serve more people in crisis.

As leaders of the legal community, we urge you to fund MLAC at \$23 million for FY19. Thank you for your strong leadership and support for civil legal aid.

Sincerely,



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Massachusetts Bar Association

Sarah H. Manning

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President
Barnstable County Bar Association

Vicki Donahue

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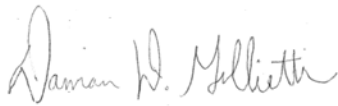
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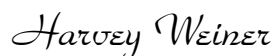
Allen J. McCarthy
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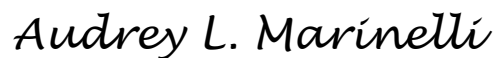
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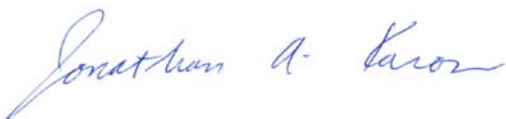
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