

December 18, 2017

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

Re: Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC, line item 0321-1600)  
FY19 Budget Request: \$23 million

Dear Governor Baker,

Thank you for approving \$18 million in funding for civil legal aid through the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in the FY18 budget. As attorneys, we are grateful that you protected this vital appropriation because we understand the difference representation can make in determining the outcome of a case. Our Commonwealth promises justice for all, and our profession has a duty to use the law to ensure that justice is served—especially for those who need it most: low-income families, elders, veterans, asylum seekers, survivors of domestic violence, and others.

In these uncertain times, the need for civil legal aid is high and the current resources of civil legal aid programs and pro bono attorneys—already stretched thin—cannot meet the increasing demand. Lack of funding forces civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts to turn away 65% of the eligible residents who seek assistance each year—which amounts to nearly 45,000 people. We, the undersigned general counsel of successful Massachusetts companies and organizations, urge you to increase MLAC funding by \$5 million in the FY19 budget, for a total appropriation of \$23 million.

Civil legal aid allows the courts to operate more effectively. In 2013, 60% of Massachusetts judges surveyed by the Boston Bar Association's Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid reported that lack of representation negatively impacted their ability to guarantee equal justice in cases involving *pro se* litigants. In addition to remedying this imbalance, civil legal aid helps the court conserve resources and limits delays for all who seek justice by reducing the time that judges and court staff must spend assisting unrepresented litigants.

The economic benefits of civil legal aid more than offset the state's investment. By helping low-income people access federal benefits, civil legal aid brings millions of federal dollars into the Massachusetts economy. To cite one of many examples, it relieves the burden on homeless shelters and other expensive emergency services. MLAC estimates that civil legal aid yielded \$49 million in total savings and benefits for the Commonwealth and its residents in FY16.

Investing in MLAC also benefits Massachusetts businesses. By helping individuals maintain access to health care and navigate the court system, legal aid allows employees to remain focused and on the job. In the Boston Bar Association's 2014 Report, *Investing in Justice*, Mary Puma, CEO of Axcelis Technologies, wrote:

When something causes an imbalance in an employee's ability to do his or her job well, it puts significant pressure on the internal workings of the company. We all know from anecdotal and scientifically collected evidence that problems at home with family, money, housing, etc. add significantly to the anxiety our employees' experience. Whether this stress manifests itself in lost work days, accidents or poor work habits, it ultimately hurts both the employer—in lost productivity, and the employee—in lost pay....Therefore, it is in the best interests of employers to

urge the Commonwealth to support speedy resolutions to these social issues through more and better civil legal aid.

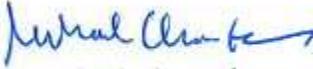
By funding programs that help low-income people resolve civil legal issues that threaten their safety and wellbeing, the state promotes access to justice, a stable workforce, successful businesses, and strong communities.

Thank you again for your past support of civil legal aid. We once again urge you to increase state funding for MLAC to \$23 million for FY19. Thank you for your leadership in this important matter.

Sincerely,



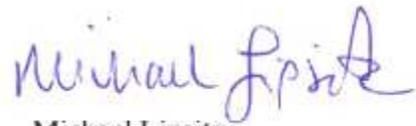
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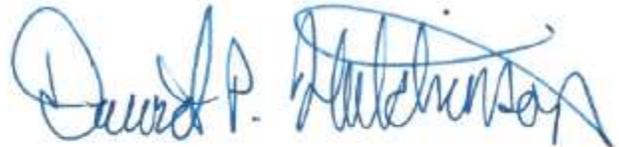
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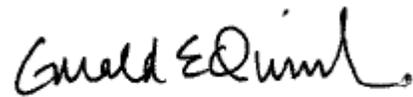
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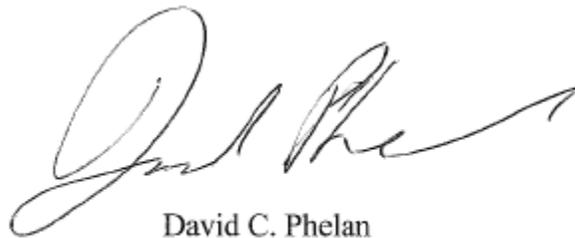
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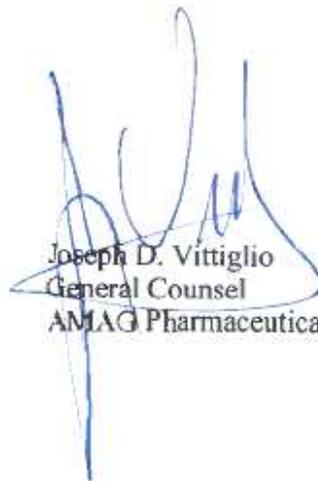
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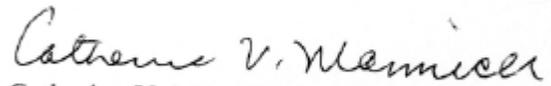
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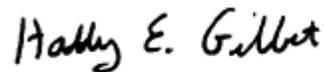
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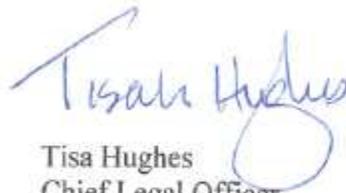
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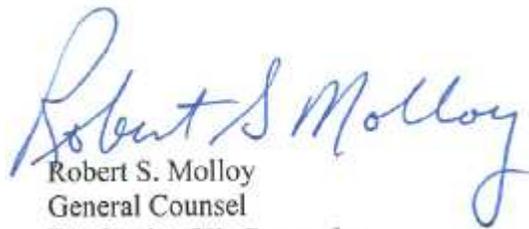
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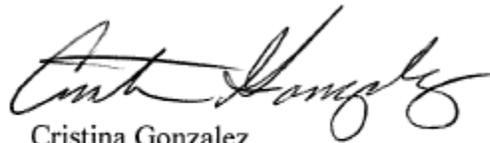
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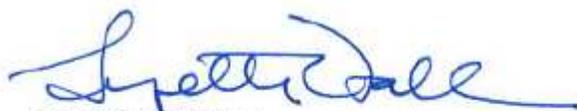
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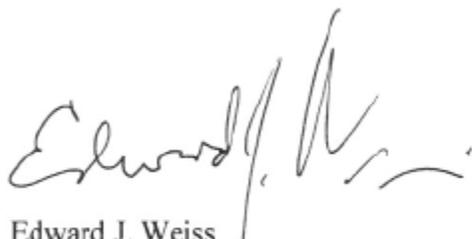
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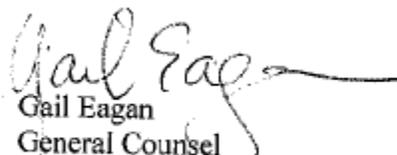
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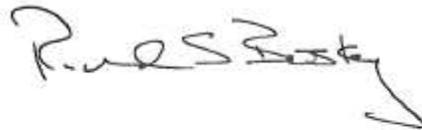
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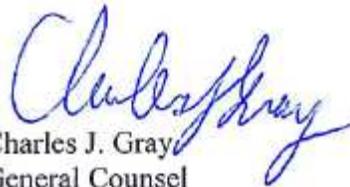
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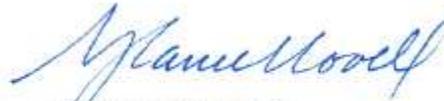
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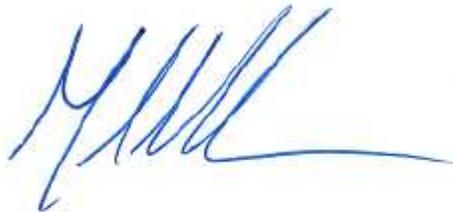
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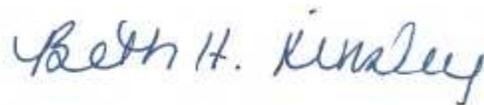
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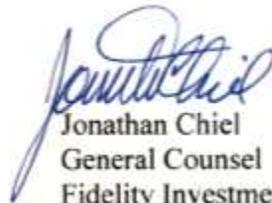
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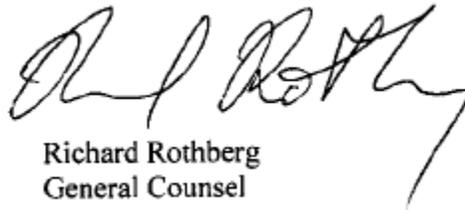
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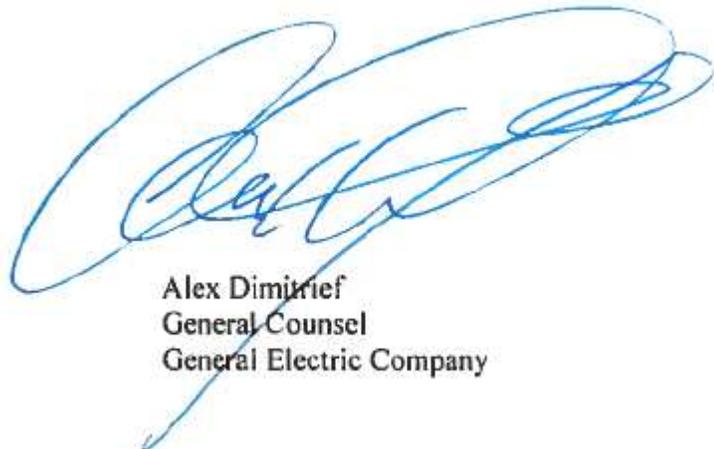
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