

February 7, 2023

Her Excellency Maura Healey
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 280
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

As managing partners representing prominent law firms from across the Commonwealth, we extend our congratulations on your election as Governor and thank you for your longtime support of legal aid. As you consider your budget recommendations for FY24, we hope you will continue to prioritize civil legal aid and access to justice by allocating \$49 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC), line item 0321-1600.

As fellow attorneys, we understand how complex the court system can be. People who do not have the means to afford legal representation face staggeringly high likelihoods of an unfavorable outcome in their cases. For eligible clients—people with incomes at or less than 125% of the federal poverty level (\$37,500 a year for a family of four in 2023)—civil legal aid can make all the difference when facing eviction, loss of benefits, domestic violence, and other serious civil legal issues. In FY22, legal aid organizations helped a total of 96,649 people across Massachusetts. Still, the level of need remains significant.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, demand for legal assistance has risen in several issue areas. Compared to the three years before the pandemic (FY17-19), case averages from FY20-FY22 reveal:

- Unemployment insurance cases have increased by 320%
- Domestic violence cases have increased by 40%
- Federally subsidized housing cases have increased by 26%
- Private landlord/tenant cases have increased by 23%
- Immigration/naturalization cases have increased by 29%

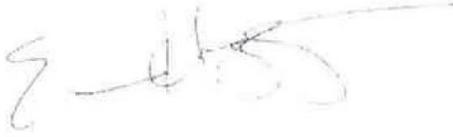
An expanded investment in civil legal aid for FY24 will translate to greater numbers of clients served, stronger infrastructure for legal aid organizations (including improved staff retention and recruitment), and more impactful collaborations with other agencies and programs that serve people with low incomes.

The legal aid sector has struggled to keep salaries competitive with public sector jobs. This makes it difficult to foster a diverse workforce representative of their client communities. By increasing salaries, legal aid organizations can attract more early-career attorneys, attorneys of color, and attorneys from low-income backgrounds.

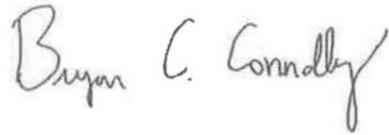
Moreover, an investment in civil legal aid generates resources for the Commonwealth. MLAC data show legal aid provided over \$126 million in estimated economic benefits to the Commonwealth and its residents last year, including savings on health care and shelter costs. By addressing issues before they become more complex and require additional public investment, legal aid saves money for people and the Commonwealth as a whole.

We respectfully urge you to keep civil legal aid a priority by including \$49 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation in your FY24 budget recommendations.

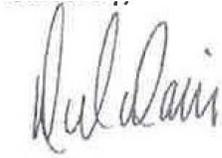
Sincerely,



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