

# Civil Legal Aid in Income Maintenance



Line Item 0321-1600

People across the Commonwealth are experiencing the lasting financial impacts of the pandemic as well as inflationary costs of living. Legal aid lawyers help people and families with low incomes receive essential benefits including social security, SNAP/ food stamps, and temporary cash assistance.

## Legal aid helps people access basic necessities by:

- Aiding people who need help filing for, or appealing, a denial of unemployment benefits
- Helping people gain access to government benefits
- Addressing the improper denial, termination, or reduction of public health benefits

## \$126 million

in economic benefits were provided by legal aid to the Commonwealth and its residents last year

People and families with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$37,500 per year for a family of four; \$18,225 for an individual) qualify for civil legal aid.

**1,942** income maintenance cases closed in FY22, including cases involving:

**546** SSI (Supplemental Security Income)

**379** SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)

**365** SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program)

**296** Other Income Maintenance

**149** TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)

**90** Social Security

**61** State and Local Maintenance

**56** Veterans Benefits



**Sue\*** is a single mother raising two school-aged sons, Sammy and Tommy. Both boys were eligible for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Child Tax Credit, but when Sue went to file her 2020 return, the computer system rejected her attempt because Sammy's father, Ed, had already claimed him on his return.

Sue talked with Ed and he agreed to amend his return, but Sue's second and third attempts at filing her taxes were both rejected. Frustrated and struggling to pay her bills, Sue contacted **Greater Boston Legal Services** for help. She was quickly connected with an attorney who had experience working on tax issues.

Sue's attorney refiled a 2020 return for her with a letter explaining the situation and Sue's eligibility. The attorney also prepared Sue's 2021 returns. Thanks to this intervention, Sue received the full amounts of both years' refunds – a total of \$21,820.

\*Names changed for privacy