

Funding the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation: \$55 Million for Civil Legal Aid in FY25



Line Item 0321-1600

FY24 Appropriation: \$49 million | Governor’s Recommendation: \$50.5 million

CIVIL LEGAL AID IS A LIFELINE FOR MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS IN CRISIS.

Legal aid organizations provide essential services related to employment, domestic safety, housing, immigration, and more. Recent funding increases at the state level have helped legal aid advocates serve more people when and where they need assistance. Notably, increased investments over the past few years have resulted in a sizable decrease in the number of eligible residents being turned away, but still only about 50% of qualified applicants receive legal representation. While progress is admirable, it is clear that significant need for civil legal services remains. The Commonwealth’s workforce shortage is continuing to impact staffing recruitment and retention at legal aid organizations across the state. The MLAC FY’25 budget request will help direct more resources to maintaining, supporting, and expanding staffing to meet rising demand for legal aid services.

People with low incomes are suffering the most from the long-term economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, due in part to the sunset of COVID-era benefits. Numerous other challenges are further exacerbating the problems of poverty, including affordable housing shortages, inflation, language barriers, systemic racism, and stagnant wages.



People and families with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$39,000 per year for a family of four and \$18,825 for an individual) qualify for civil legal aid. Census data reveal that approximately 13% of Massachusetts residents meet this requirement.

LEGAL AID IN FY23:

95,648

people benefited from civil legal aid in Massachusetts

\$100 Million

in estimated economic benefits delivered to the Commonwealth and its residents

Residents in

95%

of cities and towns in Massachusetts were assisted by civil legal aid



MLAC AT A GLANCE

MLAC is the largest funder of civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. It distributes state-appropriated funding to 16 legal aid organizations across Massachusetts and provides supportive services in the areas of information technology; data and research; hiring and recruitment; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and communications. MLAC also partners with legal aid organizations, bar associations, and the Access to Justice Commission to activate a network of pro bono lawyers and publish legal self-help materials.

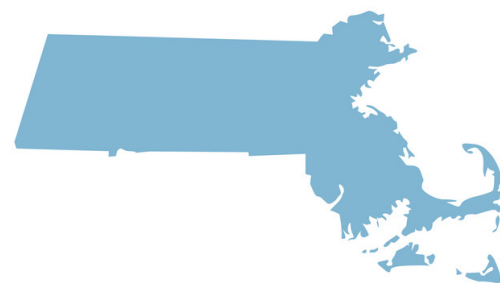
Delivering on the promise of equal justice for all. Civil legal aid organizations play an important role in delivering on the promise of “equal justice for all,” a credo enshrined in our federal and state constitutions. They provide advice and representation at no cost to people with low incomes who need help with legal issues that pose serious threats to their well-being and stability. Without civil legal aid, people who cannot afford a private attorney must navigate a complex court system alone—with potentially dire consequences.

A RANGE OF SERVICES

Legal aid advocates help people of all ages address vital civil legal issues, including:

- Housing
- Employment
- Family law
- Domestic violence
- Health care
- Education
- Veterans health care and more
- Immigration
- Income maintenance
- Taxes
- Elder law issues

Everyone deserves a fair process during legal proceedings, regardless of their income. Civil legal aid helps ensure that all residents of Massachusetts have equal access to justice.



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