

January 5, 2023

The Honorable Maura Healey  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, Room 280  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

We – general counsel and corporate counsel for leading institutions and companies operating in the Commonwealth – would like to thank you for supporting \$49 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in your FY24 budget. We are grateful for your commitment to improving access to justice in our communities. **We respectfully request that you allocate \$55 million for MLAC (line item 0321-1600) in your FY25 Budget.**

Civil legal aid is critical for supporting the economic vibrancy of our Commonwealth. Legal aid attorneys, at MLAC-funded offices around the state, help our employees, customers, and other critical stakeholders access equal education, advocate for veterans' benefits, avoid foreclosure, obtain child support, secure public benefits, resolve consumer issues, defend against financial abuse, and leverage *pro bono* resources. They help people stay on their feet or get back up after a crisis, and contribute to our economy and society. Massachusetts residents are eligible for MLAC-funded legal services if they have incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level: \$18,225 for an individual and \$37,500 for a family of four in 2023. When people can obtain, for example, safe and stable housing with support from a lawyer, they are better able to participate in economic life and achieve self-sufficiency.

In FY23, more than 95,000 Massachusetts residents benefitted from civil legal aid—including “Tristan” (names changed for privacy):

*“Tristan” is a devoted father and U.S. Veteran who needed help protecting his 4-year-old son, “Dustin.” Tristan was married but separated from Dustin’s mother, “Tammy,” who struggles with substance abuse. When Tammy filed false allegations against Tristan, he was ordered to leave the home and could not see his son for a full year. That was a very dark time for Tristan; he didn’t always have stable housing and didn’t think he had much of a chance to get custody of Dustin. But he worried about his son due to his wife’s drug use and was told by a counselor to seek divorce.*

*Tristan sought legal help from Veterans Legal Services (VLS) and a pro bono family law attorney took his case. The attorney, an expert in family law matters, helped Tristan not only obtain a divorce but also secure custody of Dustin. Father and son are now living together in stable housing. With his family saga behind him, Tristan is freer to give back to our Commonwealth through his employment and engagement with his community.*

**In FY23, MLAC-funded legal aid organizations secured approximately \$100 million for Massachusetts and its residents.** This includes more than \$83.8 million in estimated benefits

won for clients and more than \$16 million in estimated savings obtained for the Commonwealth. Consider how legal aid attorneys – by assisting with domestic violence claims, housing, and health care access – break the cycle of poverty and keep people out of already-crowded emergency shelters and hospitals. Because of legal services, our neighbors can be safe, healthy, and financially stable. And ultimately, the positive impacts of civil legal aid (helping people stay focused on their jobs and families, rather than on serious legal problems; improving the functioning of the court system; addressing systemic issues in our communities) are felt by *all* stakeholders, including the businesses that serve Massachusetts residents.

Legal aid attorneys work tirelessly every day—but in the end, they don't have enough time or resources to help everyone who comes to them for services. Additional funding is necessary to bolster their operations and expand access to more people in need.

As attorneys committed to equal justice before the law – and as corporate lawyers committed to economic justice for our employees, consumers, and stakeholders – we ask that you include \$55 million for civil legal aid (MLAC line item 0321-1600) in your FY25 budget recommendations.

Thank you again for your efforts on behalf of the people of Massachusetts.

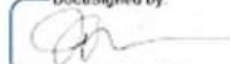
Sincerely,



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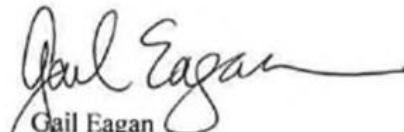
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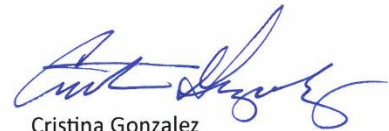
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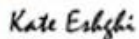


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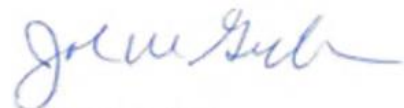
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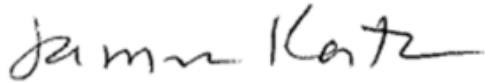
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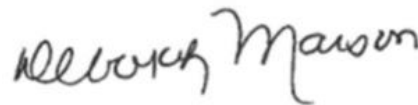
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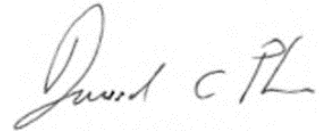
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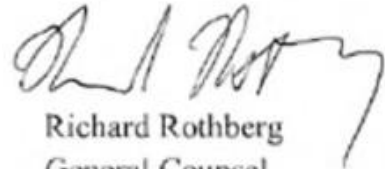
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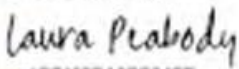
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