

Please Co-sponsor Rep. Balser's amendment to add \$1.5 million for Civil Legal Aid in FY18

The House Ways & Means Committee recommended \$19.5 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in its FY18 budget, an increase of \$1.5 million over FY17. We are incredibly grateful for this first step, and appreciate the Ways and Means Committee's recognition of the urgent need to support civil legal aid.

Representative Ruth Balser's amendment would increase the House Ways & Means recommendation by \$1.5 million, for a total appropriation of \$21 million for civil legal aid.

- ☑ **To co-sponsor this amendment, please contact Dmitriy Gridnev in Rep. Balser's office at 617-722-2396 or dmitriy.gridnev@mahouse.gov.**

Low-income individuals and families depend on civil legal aid

- ☑ MLAC funds 14 programs that provide free legal advice and representation to tens of thousands of our state's poorest and most vulnerable residents. Civil legal aid provides critical support in cases related to housing, employment, family law, domestic violence, health care, education, immigration, protection of elders, and more.
- ☑ Almost 1 million people in Massachusetts live at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$30,750 a year for a family of four), making them eligible for civil legal aid.
- ☑ Due to lack of funding, civil legal aid programs are forced to turn away **65% of eligible low-income residents** who seek services.

Civil legal aid: A wise investment to meet an urgent need

- ☑ Without civil legal aid, vulnerable Massachusetts residents, including families with young children, elders, and domestic violence survivors, are forced to face the complex legal system alone, with often devastating consequences on the health and welfare of individuals and communities.
- ☑ MLAC's Economic Benefits report found that **civil legal aid provided by MLAC-funded programs in fiscal year 2016 yielded at least \$49.3 million in savings or new revenue for the state and its residents.**
- ☑ With federal funding for civil legal aid and other safety net programs under threat, state investment in civil legal aid is more important than ever.



In FY16, civil legal aid provided by MLAC-funded programs yielded \$49.3 million in savings or new revenue for the state and its residents.

For more information, contact

Elaine O'Reilly at 617-447-5174, Mary Ann Walsh at 617-447-3711, or Lonnie Powers at 617-367-1414.

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation was established by the Commonwealth in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation. For more information, visit www.mlac.org.