



July 22, 2019

His Excellency Charles D. Baker
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Fiscal Year 2020 State Budget- Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Dear Governor Baker:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Bar Association and its 14,500 members statewide, I am writing to urge you to preserve the \$24 million in funding allocated by the Legislature for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in the FY20 budget.

As you know, MLAC provides funding for basic civil legal needs of low-income people, helping them with issues related to housing, immigration, family law, domestic violence, health care, education and protection of elders.

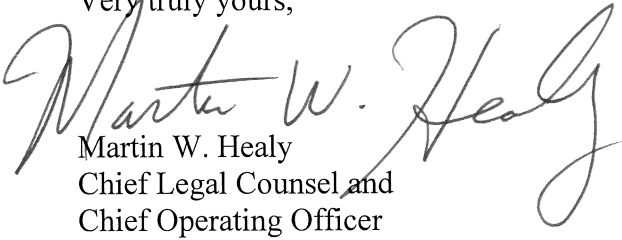
Funding for MLAC is essential to addressing the significant unmet legal needs of the most vulnerable citizens in the Commonwealth. Nearly two-thirds of eligible residents are turned away due to a lack of resources. To be eligible for legal services, residents' income must be at or below one hundred twenty five percent of the federal poverty level. When the Massachusetts Bar Association was founded over 100 years ago, we adopted the motto "fiat justitia." *Let justice be done.* Justice should not be deterred due to economic barriers.

Additionally, adequately funding legal services is a sage investment for the Commonwealth. MLAC's Economic Benefits report found that MLAC-funded civil legal aid programs in FY18 yielded \$60.5 million in savings or new revenue for the state and its residents, including \$6.5 million in federal revenue. Clients of civil legal aid programs are often times; families with young children, the elderly and domestic violence survivors. Attorneys assist these vulnerable people in navigating a complex legal system as well as assisting them in attaining benefits that are vital to their safety and welfare.

Every resident of the Commonwealth is entitled to equal protection under the law. The preservation of MLAC's funding in the House and Senate budgets would greatly help to ensure

that every resident of Massachusetts has equal access to legal representation. Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martin W. Healy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

Martin W. Healy
Chief Legal Counsel and
Chief Operating Officer

cc: Robert Ross, Chief Legal Counsel to the Governor