

Please Co-sponsor Balser and Cronin amendment (#243) to add an additional \$2 million for Civil Legal Aid in FY19

The House Ways & Means Committee recommended \$20 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in its FY19 budget, an increase of \$2 million over FY18. We appreciate the Ways and Means Committee's recognition of the urgent need to support civil legal aid.

Representative Ruth Balser and Representative Claire Cronin have filed an amendment to increase the House Ways & Means recommendation by an additional \$2 million, for a total appropriation of \$22 million for civil legal aid.

To co-sponsor this amendment, please sign on via the Quill system.

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 Massachusetts residents living in poverty (people with income at or below 125% of the federal poverty level— \$31,375 a year for a family of four— are eligible for civil legal aid).
- Without civil legal aid, low-income individuals and families with serious civil legal problems related to housing, health care, immigration, domestic violence, disability benefits, and other issues must navigate the court system alone.
- **Lack of funding forces civil legal aid programs to turn away 65% of eligible low-income residents who seek services.**

Civil legal aid: Responding to emerging needs

- Changes in federal policy and cuts to anti-poverty programs have greatly increased the civil legal needs of low-income people and the elderly, making civil legal aid more important than ever for our state's most vulnerable residents.
- The impact of civil legal aid extends far beyond providing assistance in individual cases, with civil legal aid programs engaging in systemic advocacy and responding to large-scale, emerging needs such as the opioid crisis, resettlement of people affected by Hurricane Maria, and changes in federal immigration policies that threaten employment and family stability.



In FY17, civil legal aid provided by MLAC-funded programs yielded \$59.2 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.