

## Please co-sponsor Creem/Brownsberger amendment #992 to add an additional \$4 million for Civil Legal Aid in FY19

The Senate Ways & Means Committee recommended \$19 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in its FY19 budget, an increase of \$1 million over FY18. We appreciate the Ways and Means Committee's recognition of the urgent need to support civil legal aid.

Senator Cynthia Creem and Senator Will Brownsberger filed Amendment #992 to increase the Senate Ways & Means recommendation by an additional \$4 million, for a total appropriation of \$23 million for civil legal aid. Senators can sign on as co-sponsors via the LAWS system.

### Low-income individuals and families depend on civil legal aid

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- 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

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- 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**

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*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](http://www.mlac.org).*