

MLAC Praises \$6M increase for civil legal aid in House Ways & Means Budget

Impact of pandemic on low-income people heightens urgency of civil legal aid

BOSTON, April 14, 2021 – Today, the House Ways and Means Committee presented its Fiscal Year 2022 budget, including \$35 million to fund civil legal aid through the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, line item 0321-1600. That is a \$6 million increase over FY21.

“We are extremely grateful to House Speaker Ronald Mariano and House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz for their leadership in providing critical increased funding for civil legal aid, an essential service that safeguards vulnerable people at risk of losing their housing, income, benefits, and other necessary protections,” said Lynne Parker, executive director of MLAC, noting that the funding increase is an important recognition of the profound impact COVID-19 has had on low-income people in Massachusetts. “COVID-19 has not just threatened the lives and livelihood of the most vulnerable people in our communities. In many cases it has also limited their ability to reach out for civil legal aid protections and use the technology necessary to participate in remote court proceedings. Legal aid organizations have been engaged and innovative in responding to this urgent need,” Parker said.

Parker also thanked members of the House for their support of this increased funding, noting that they have seen firsthand during the pandemic how attorneys in civil legal aid organizations across the state have helped their constituents in crisis.

She praised the Equal Justice Coalition, which has championed the essential work of civil legal aid, including the Massachusetts Bar Association, the Boston Bar Association, the Women’s Bar Association, managing partners of many of the state’s largest law firms, and advocates with social services organizations across the Commonwealth.

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About MLAC: The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest funding source for civil legal aid organizations in Massachusetts. The Commonwealth established MLAC in 1983 to ensure that low-income people facing critical, non-criminal legal issues would have access to legal information, advice, and representation. For more information, please visit mlac.org.

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