

# Co-sponsor Rep. Balser's Amendment to add \$9 million for Civil Legal Aid

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

LINE ITEM #0321-1600

The House Ways & Means Committee recommended \$18 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) in its FY17 budget, an increase of \$1 million over FY16. This is a positive step in the direction of the \$10 million increase in civil legal aid funding sought by MLAC to address the great depth of unmet need among people seeking civil legal aid, and the significant return on investment yielded by civil legal aid funding for the state.

Representative Ruth Balser's amendment would increase the House Ways & Means recommendation by \$9 million, for a total appropriation of \$27 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](mailto:dmitriy.gridnev@mahouse.gov).**

## Civil legal aid sustains low-income individuals and families who are in crisis

- MLAC funds 14 programs statewide that provide free legal advice and representation to tens of thousands of our state's poorest and most vulnerable residents.
- Civil legal aid is a last resort for low-income residents facing critical issues such as child custody, domestic violence, denial of federal benefits, and homelessness.
- Due to lack of funding, civil legal aid programs **are forced to turn away 64% of eligible low-income residents** who seek services.

**Almost  
1 million people** in Massachusetts live at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$30,375 a year for a family of four), making them eligible for civil legal aid.



**For every dollar invested in civil legal aid, \$2-\$5 is returned to the state and its residents.**

## Civil legal aid: A proven return on investment

- A report by the Boston Bar Association (BBA) Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid found that **for every dollar invested in civil legal aid, the return to the state is \$2-\$5.**
- The BBA Task Force recommended increasing funding for civil legal aid by \$30 million over three years.
- Civil legal aid is the most powerful tool in our justice system and it saves the state money.

**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 30 years ago 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).*