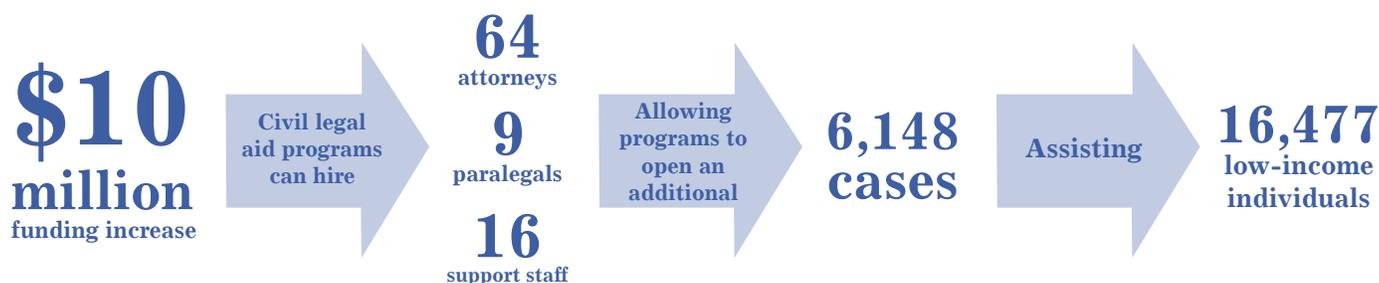


# Investing in Impact: \$10 million increase for civil legal aid in FY 17

Civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts face a funding shortage that forces them to turn away 64 percent of eligible clients who seek services. To address this crisis, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC, Line Item 0321-1600) is requesting a \$10 million increase in state funding for civil legal aid in the FY17 budget.

This additional funding will enable civil legal aid programs to expand their **housing, domestic violence, education, employment, and elder law** work and serve more low-income people in need.



Examples include:

**Community Legal Aid**, serving Central and Western Massachusetts, could hire five attorneys to work on housing, education, and employment cases in underserved areas. A top priority would be expanding access to appropriate school supports and addressing disproportionate discipline among marginalized students in high-need schools, especially children of color and students with disabilities.

**The Disability Law Center** could hire additional staff to monitor for abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities who live in private psychiatric facilities, state-run psychiatric hospitals, and thousands of group homes across the state. DLC is the only organization of its kind in the state.

**Investments in systemic advocacy**—using legal action, education and advocacy to address public and institutional policies and procedures that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, create barriers to opportunity, and cause economic instability. *Systemic advocacy creates long-term change and has the potential to impact all of the nearly one million people in the state who are eligible for civil legal aid (income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$30,313 a year for a family of four).* A recent example of systemic advocacy is the effort undertaken by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and others to reinstate federal nutrition benefits for thousands of residents whose benefits were wrongly terminated after the flawed implementation of a new data-matching system.

With additional funding, MLAC-funded programs can also make important, **long-term enhancements in infrastructure** to better serve clients, including improving case management and online intake systems to streamline services and help more clients, as well as upgrading websites to make important resources and information easily accessible to the people who need them.

## MLAC-funded Civil Legal Aid Programs

Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau	Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Center for Law and Education	Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Center for Public Representation	MetroWest Legal Services
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts	National Consumer Law Center
Community Legal Aid	Northeast Legal Aid
Community Legal Services and Counseling Center	Prisoners' Legal Services
Disability Law Center	South Coastal Counties Legal Services
Greater Boston Legal Services	