

## Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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### **House Budget Includes \$12 Million for Civil Legal Aid**

BOSTON (April 26, 2012) – The House voted last night to provide \$12 million for civil legal assistance to low-income residents of Massachusetts in the state budget for fiscal year 2013 (FY13). This amount represents an increase of \$1 million over the House Ways & Means Committee’s recommendation earlier this month. The funds will go to the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation line item (MLAC, 0321-1600). MLAC is the largest source of funding for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth.

Following the Ways & Means recommendation, Rep. Ruth Balser of Newton sponsored an amendment to increase the MLAC line item to \$13 million. Forty Representatives joined her in signing the amendment.

“We are incredibly grateful for the leadership that Rep. Balser displayed in spearheading our amendment, as well as the strong support of her colleagues in House,” said Lonnie Powers, MLAC’s executive director. “We are also grateful to Speaker of the House DeLeo, House Ways & Means Chair Dempsey and House Judiciary Chair O’Flaherty for their commitment to legal aid. And we are deeply appreciative for the countless emails, letter and calls made by the private attorney community, whose support was critical in securing the additional funds.”

Legal aid programs have been struggling to meet increased demand after a 78 percent decrease in revenue from the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, the other major funding source for civil legal aid. MLAC has cut grants to the 16 legal aid programs it funds by 56 percent since FY08. MLAC requested \$14.5 million in the FY13 budget to stabilize legal services programs statewide and to prevent further cuts.

MLAC previously released a report showing that in FY11, new revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth won by MLAC-funded legal aid programs totaled an estimated \$53.2 million, of which \$27.7 million was in the form of new federal revenue. This year’s report demonstrates that fewer legal aid lawyers results in fewer services for clients and fewer federal funds for our state.

Governor Patrick recommended \$12 million for MLAC in the FY13 budget. The FY13 budget will now be taken up by the Senate, which is expected to vote on its proposal in May.

### **ABOUT MLAC**

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) was established in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems have access to legal information, advice and representation. It is the largest funding source for civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts. For more information, visit <http://www.mlac.org>.

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