

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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House and Senate Conference Budget Supports Civil Legal Aid, Recommends \$12 Million
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation Grateful for Increased Support from Legislature

BOSTON, June 28, 2012 – The House and Senate voted today to approve the Conference Committee’s budget recommendation for fiscal year 2013, which includes an appropriation of \$12 million for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC), the largest funding source for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth (line item 0321-1600). This amount represents a much needed \$1.5 million increase over the FY12 appropriation.

“On behalf of the Massachusetts legal aid community, I would like to thank the legislative leadership and Conference Committee members for their recommendation to fund legal aid at \$12 million,” said Lonnie Powers, MLAC’s executive director. “They have shown they understand the critical role that access to legal help plays in keeping communities and families stable during difficult economic times.”

“The Governor originally proposed \$12 million, and we urge him to affirm his long-standing commitment to civil legal aid and support funding for MLAC at \$12 million as he signs the FY13 budget,” said Powers.

An increase in MLAC’s state appropriation is critically needed this year because revenue from the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA), traditionally legal aid’s most important funding source, has decreased 78 percent since FY08. This decline in funding comes at a time when the economic crisis has created a sharp increase in demand for legal services. Calls to local legal aid programs have increased as residents seek help with unemployment benefits, foreclosures and many other issues. At the same time, legal aid programs, which dedicate the vast majority of their budgets to providing direct client service, have had to lay off attorneys and paralegals, institute furloughs and leave positions unfilled.

ABOUT MLAC

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation was established by the legislature in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems would 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 www.mlac.org.

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