Dear friends of legal aid,

FY2015 was a promising year for civil legal aid, as we secured a $2 million increase in the state’s FY15 budget, for a total appropriation of $15 million. Unfortunately, as the state budget deficit deepened, we suffered a 1.79% mid-year cut that dealt a blow to our ability to serve the hundreds of thousands of low-income people eligible for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. Backed by new data on the economic benefits of legal aid and a coalition of supporters that is stronger than ever, MLAC continues to advocate for increased funding to sustain, strengthen, and grow our grantee organizations.

Critical to MLAC’s advocacy efforts are the findings of the Boston Bar Association’s Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts. In its report, Investing in Justice: A Roadmap to Cost-Effective Funding of Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts, the Task Force found that a staggering two-thirds of eligible clients who seek civil legal aid are turned away. The Task Force, comprised of representatives from civil legal aid programs, the private bar, the business community, academia, the state legislature, and the bench, also found that funding civil legal aid brings significant economic returns to the state and its residents. The Task Force report generated positive, well-deserved media attention, and strengthened MLAC’s partnerships with the private bar and some of the state’s leading business people. Further, its call for $30 million in new state funding for MLAC, to be phased in over the next three years, will be the basis for a multi-year campaign to make equal justice for all a reality.

In FY2015, we also increased our role as a prominent voice for legal aid in the Commonwealth through blog posts, op-eds, and a new social media campaign that encouraged legal aid advocates to share messages of support for civil legal aid. We were humbled and inspired by how many people took part and plan to make this an integral part of our yearly campaign. Lonnie Powers’ blog post, “Civil legal assistance saves money and helps people escape poverty,” received national attention and bolstered the fight for equal justice around the country. We look forward to finding new and creative ways to raise the profile of civil legal aid in the coming years.

FY2015 was also a time of transitions; voters elected a new governor for the first time in eight years and the General Court welcomed five new senators and 20 new representatives. Earlier in the year, longtime legal aid supporter the Honorable Ralph Gants was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, and the Honorable Geraldine Hines became the first Black woman to sit on the Commonwealth’s highest court. MLAC looks forward to cultivating new relationships and building on existing ties with this dedicated group of public servants.

The following pages are a testament to the difference civil legal aid makes in people’s lives every day. The successes of this fiscal year would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of civil legal aid attorneys, staff, and supporters from across the state, to whom we are deeply thankful for moving us closer to equal justice for all.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Powers
Executive Director

Marijane Benner Browne
Chair
The civil legal aid programs funded by MLAC provide free legal information, advice, and representation to low-income individuals facing critical, non-criminal legal problems in matters of housing, employment, domestic violence, educational accommodations, and many others.

**FY 2015 Accomplishments**

The civil legal aid programs funded by MLAC provided free legal services to low-income individuals in FY 2015, resulting in the following achievements:

- **23,231 Cases Closed**
- **84,677 People Helped**

New federal revenue for civil legal aid clients won by MLAC-funded organizations totaled **$13.5 million** in FY 2015. Potential savings for the state as a result of MLAC advocacy are estimated to be **$11.6 million**, including **$7.3 million** in avoided shelter costs for low-income residents facing eviction.

- The Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project represented **915 survivors** in complex cases involving physical safety, child custody and support, financial security, health care coverage, and other issues.
- The Disability Benefits Project closed **881 cases**, winning approximately **$5 million** in federal SSI/SSDI benefits for elderly Massachusetts residents and those with long-term disabilities.
- The Medicare Advocacy Project helped **408 elders** and people with disabilities obtain the Medicare benefits to which they were entitled.

**MLAC-funded organizations employed**

- **208 attorneys**
- **53 paralegals**

665 private attorneys collectively donated **36,571** hours of assistance through MLAC-funded programs, representing a value of more than **$8 million**.
Making a difference for low-income families

Tom first hit Mindy* when their daughter was just two months old. He punched her in the face and tried to choke her, all the while screaming that it was her fault. Over the years, the verbal abuse, threats, and violence escalated. Mindy felt terrified and trapped. She wanted to protect herself and her daughter, but didn’t know how to escape or where she could go.

After finding loaded handguns in their apartment, Mindy knew it was time to leave for good. She called the police and pressed charges, and Tom was put in jail. He resurfaced two years later, stalking Mindy and threatening her life again. That’s when Mindy went to Community Legal Aid, where her legal aid attorney helped her secure a permanent restraining order and gain sole custody of her daughter, with no visitation rights for Tom. Thanks to Community Legal Aid, Mindy has been able to start fresh and create a safe and bright future for herself and her daughter.

Greater Boston Legal Services School-to-Prison Pipeline Intervention Project protects Boston-area children with disabilities from illegal school suspensions, and ensures that they receive the special education services and home-based mental health care that they need to make their time at school meaningful. One of the children who has benefited from this project is seven-year-old Jamal*, who was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after enduring years of violence and homelessness. These traumas, combined with ADHD, led to behavioral challenges.

One day when his class was listening to music, Jamal did not want to listen and covered his ears. His teacher tried to pry Jamal’s hands off his ears and he panicked, screaming at his teachers and running from the room. He was chased by school staff until they encircled him and restrained him on the floor. When Jamal hit, bit, and scratched them to get free, they suspended him.

GBLS attorney Elizabeth McIntyre intervened, meeting with Jamal and his family, and with school staff. She reminded the school of the stringent legal standard for restraints and impressed upon them how restraints re-traumatize children. They discussed the school’s obligations under the new school discipline law that requires schools to use suspension only as a last resort. McIntyre defended Jamal in suspension hearings and connected Jamal’s family with mental health care providers who provide trauma-informed in-home therapy. As of this writing, Jamal has not been suspended or restrained in over a year. After his school learned to accommodate his disabilities, he started soaking up the material at an astonishing rate and his reading and writing skills improved greatly. This child may have been headed toward failure in school, but just a few months after the intervention by GBLS, he cheerfully pointed to his school papers on the family’s refrigerator and proudly noted a sticker that said “GREAT!” Jamal explained, “That’s because I’m great.”

* Names have been changed to protect client privacy
Speaking up for civil legal aid

In FY15, we launched the #IWalkforJustice social media campaign to highlight the many reasons why attorneys and advocates join the Equal Justice Coalition’s annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid. We asked legal aid supporters to take a picture of themselves holding a sign explaining why they are passionate about legal aid, and then share the picture on social media using the hashtag #IWalkforJustice.

The campaign energized our supporters for Walk to the Hill while sharing the legal aid message with a much larger audience than we usually reach. Elected officials including Congressman Joseph Kennedy III and Attorney General Maura Healey, leaders from the private bar, legal services staff, and other advocates all took part in the campaign, sending a clear signal to the legislature that people across the Commonwealth support legal aid.

We look forward to continuing the campaign in the coming years. Our thanks to all who spoke up for legal aid!

#IWalkforJustice
#IWalkforJustice
#IWalkforJustice
#IWalkforJustice
#IWalkforJustice
#IWalkforJustice

Myrta Cupeles
Northeast Legal Aid

Fran Fajana
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Congressman Joseph Kennedy III

Attorneys at Nutter, McClennen & Fish

Ravi Braich and Tarae Howell
Nixon Peabody

Margaret Marshall
Mass. Chief Justice (retired)
### REGIONAL PROGRAMS

#### Eastern Region

**Greater Boston Legal Services**
- General Support: $3,253,103
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $766,096
- Disability Benefits Project: $309,584
- Medicare Advocacy Project: $289,288
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $453,311
- Fellowship: $50,000
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $196,740
- Justice AmeriCorps: $23,000
- Total: $5,341,143

**Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau**
- Disability Benefits Project: $18,028
- Total: $18,028

**Community Legal Services and Counseling Center**
- General Support: $90,848
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $21,168
- Disability Benefits Project: $9,148
- Justice AmeriCorps: $11,500
- Total: $132,664

**MetroWest Legal Services**
- General Support: $457,901
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $100,556
- Disability Benefits Project: $46,116
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $115,153
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $26,572
- Justice AmeriCorps: $11,500
- Total: $757,798

#### Central/West Region

**Community Legal Aid**
- General Support: $2,804,703
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $667,520
- Disability Benefits Project: $247,060
- Medicare Advocacy Project: $96,556
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $665,659
- Farmworkers: $50,000
- Justice AmeriCorps: $23,000
- Total: $4,554,498

**Northeast Region**

**Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts**
- General Support: $136,891
- Total: $136,891

**Northeast Legal Aid**
- General Support: $1,469,696
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $376,396
- Disability Benefits Project: $159,208
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $335,499
- Justice AmeriCorps: $11,500
- Total: $2,352,299

*VLP only received funds from the Attorney General’s HomeCorps Initiative.

#### Southeast Region

**South Coastal Counties Legal Services**
- General Support: $1,708,889
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $422,660
- Disability Benefits Project: $172,100
- Medicare Advocacy Project: $61,136
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $261,593
- Justice AmeriCorps: $11,500
- Total: $2,637,878

**Statewide Programs**

**Center for Law and Education**
- General Support: $122,641
- Fellowship: $26,667
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $8,027
- Total: $157,334

**Center for Public Representation**
- General Support: $208,491
- Disability Benefits Project: $35,396
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $9,618
- Total: $253,504

**Disability Law Center**
- General Support: $245,283
- Disability Benefits Project: $182,256
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $9,080
- Total: $436,619

**Massachusetts Advocates for Children**
- General Support: $96,887
- Total: $96,887

**Massachusetts Law Reform Institute**
- General Support: $1,471,691
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project: $82,868
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $36,612
- Fellowship: $92,139
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $103,504
- Website: $329,883
- Total: $2,116,697

**National Consumer Law Center**
- General Support: $122,641
- Attorney General, HomeCorps: $386,015
- Total: $508,656

**Prisoners’ Legal Services**
- General Support: $159,434
- Technology Grants & Equipment: $4,731
- Total: $164,165

**Volunteer Lawyers Project**
- General Support: $47,042
- Total: $47,042
# Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

For the year ending June 30, 2015

## REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation*</td>
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<td>Attorney General's Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HomeCorps Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>HomeCorps Management Fees</td>
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<td>Massachusetts IOLTA Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts Program</td>
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<td>Opt-out Bar Registration Fees</td>
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<td>Pro Hac Vice Fees</td>
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<td>IOLTA Committee Management Fees</td>
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<td>Interest and Other Income</td>
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<td>Donated Legal Services</td>
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**Total Revenues** | $21,941,377

## EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>Restricted Projects</th>
<th>Program Support Initiatives</th>
<th>IOLTA Administrative Services</th>
<th>MLAC Administrative</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Grants Awarded</td>
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<td>Salaries**</td>
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<td>$35,390</td>
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</table>

**Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense** | $13,171,504 | $6,412,787 | $1,561,988 | $73,792 | $1,386,427 | $22,606,498 |

**Allocation of Administrative Expense** | $1,318,476 |  |  |  |  | ($1,318,476) |

**Total Expenses** | $14,489,980 | $6,412,787 | $1,561,988 | $73,792 | $67,951 | $22,606,498 |

*MLAC directs all of its state-appropriated funds to general support, loan forgiveness, the Disability Benefits Project, the Medicare Advocacy Project, and the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. General support and loan forgiveness are supplemented by IOLTA funds. In FY15 $2,224,552 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and $10,039 to loan forgiveness.*

**Salaries for Restricted Projects are for HomeCorps only.**

## ASSETS

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Net Assets June 30, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY15 Net Income or (Loss)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets June 30, 2015</strong></td>
<td>$1,987,762</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MLAC Board of Directors

Marijane Benner Browne, Chair  
*Ropes & Gray*

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*Badger Legal Group*

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*Law Office of Martha Rush O’Mara*

Martin V. Tomassian  
*Tomassian & Tomassian*

Geoffrey Wilson  
*Presiding Justice, Franklin County Probate and Family Court (retired)*

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Sarah Blair - Legislative Campaign Assistant; Executive Assistant
Janne Hellgren - Deputy Director
Danielle Hines-Graham - Operations Manager
Tobey Johnson - Director of Information Technology
Freddy Matute - Fiscal Manager
Lonnie Powers - Executive Director
Catherine Rizos - Communications Manager
Ricardo Sánchez - Legislative Campaign Coordinator
Patricia Shaughnessy - Support and Training Specialist
Deborah Silva - Director, Equal Justice Coalition
Donna Southwell - Director of Policy Analysis
Jacqueline Sullivan - Technology Support Specialist
Patricia Swansey - Program Director

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

7 Winthrop Square, 2nd Floor  
Boston, MA 02110  
Phone: 617-367-8544  
Fax: 617-426-0656  
www.mlac.org

MLAC was established by the Commonwealth in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation.

MLAC is the largest funding source for civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts.