



# Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR

# 2017

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

## Our Mission

*The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) was established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts 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 organizations in Massachusetts. With funding from the Commonwealth, the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program, and other sources, MLAC provides grants to local and statewide civil legal aid organizations, as well as operational training and support to the Massachusetts legal aid community.*

Dear friends of legal aid,

Massachusetts civil legal aid organizations faced a demanding year. Drastic shifts in the national political climate introduced new barriers in our work toward achieving equal access to justice for all. Changes in federal policy threaten the benefits, supports, and legal protections that people living in poverty rely on to maintain their health, safety, and well-being. Meanwhile, potential cuts to federal funding for civil legal aid—combined with revenue shortfalls in the state budget—put an additional strain on the Commonwealth's civil legal aid organizations, which currently turn away two out of every three eligible people who seek help.

Despite these obstacles, increased awareness of the importance of civil legal aid has led to new partnerships and funding opportunities. In addition to a \$1 million increase in state appropriation for legal aid in FY17 (for a total of \$18 million), MLAC received a \$500,000 foundation grant to provide relief to immigrants and their families. Other successes, including a class-action settlement that brought more than \$3.5 million in new funding to civil legal aid in the Commonwealth, as well as an exciting new partnership with the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance, give us hope during these uncertain times.

The state's legal aid organizations work hard to make equal access to justice for all a reality. MLAC-funded organizations assisted more than 80,000 people this year. We are grateful to the attorneys and staff for the critical work they perform every day and to the many allies of civil legal aid for their partnership and support. Together, we work toward a more just future for Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



**Lonnie A. Powers**  
Executive Director



**Marijane Benner Browne**  
Chair, Board of Directors

# FY 2017 Accomplishments

**22,950**  
CASES CLOSED



**82,240**  
PEOPLE HELPED

**1,102**

Cases closed by the Disability Benefits Project, winning \$5.1 million in federal SSI/SSDI benefits for elderly Massachusetts residents and those with long-term disabilities.

**661**

Domestic violence survivors assisted in complex cases — involving physical safety, child custody and support, health care coverage, and other issues — by the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project.

**232**

Elders and people with disabilities who obtained Medicare benefits to which they were entitled through the Medicare Advocacy Project.

**MLAC-funded  
programs employed**



**755**  
private attorneys

collectively donated  
**46,048**  
hours

of skilled pro-bono assistance through MLAC-funded organizations, representing a value of

**\$10.3 million**

# Legal Aid Changes Lives

## What is Civil Legal Aid?

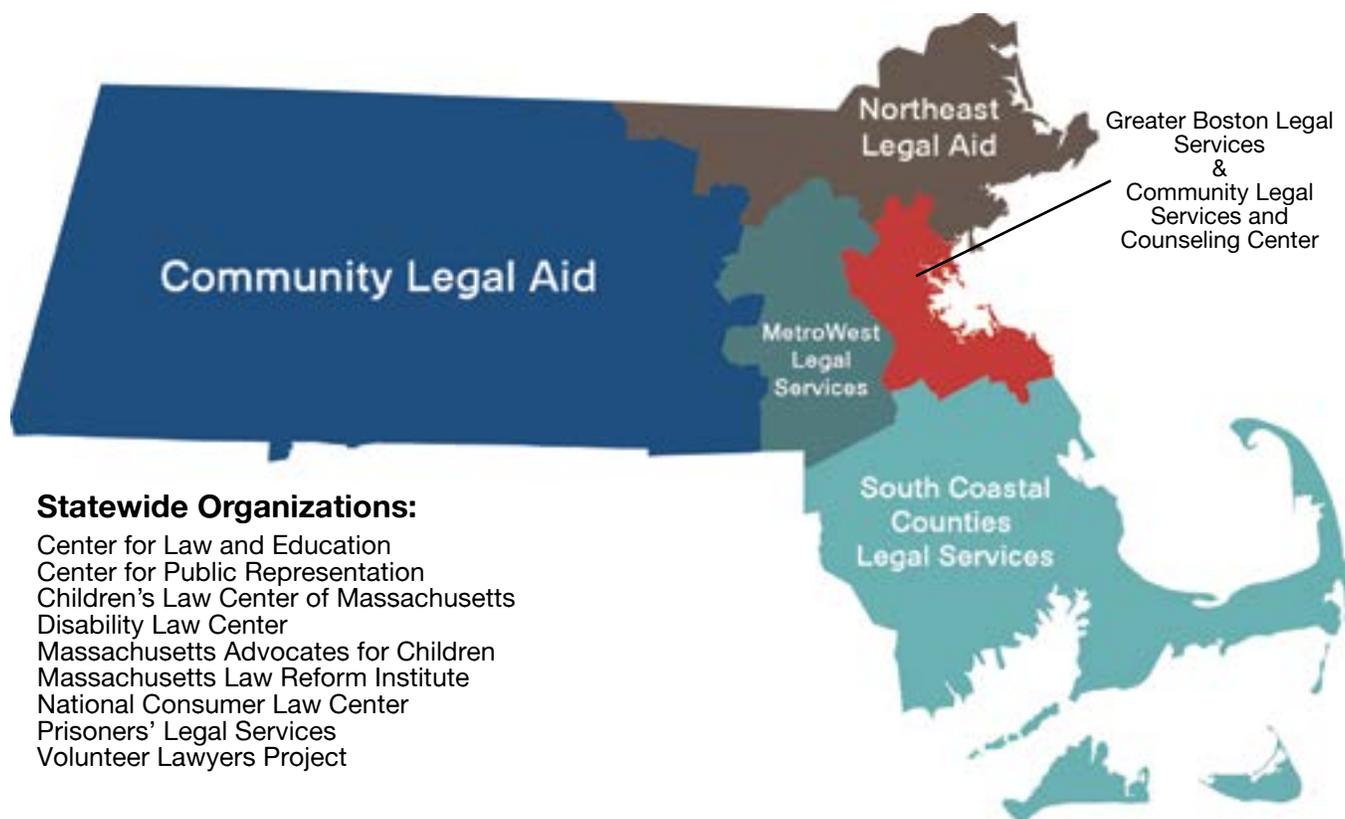
In the United States, people have a right to an attorney in criminal cases if they are charged with a crime. However, people don't have a right to an attorney in civil cases, even though the potential outcomes of civil cases can be severe: people can lose their homes, health, safety, family, and financial stability—all without ever speaking to a lawyer. Unless they have the money to hire a private attorney, people face the daunting task of representing themselves in a complex court system.

Civil legal aid provides free advice and representation to low-income people who otherwise would not receive help with serious civil legal issues related to health care, housing, public benefits, education, immigration, domestic violence, consumer law, family law, and employment.

## The role of MLAC

MLAC distributes funds from a variety of sources, primarily from the state budget and Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account funds, to civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. These organizations either provide civil legal aid to people in a particular geographic region, or specialize in a specific area of law and serve residents statewide. In addition to funding, MLAC also provides these organizations with support in: communications; data and research; development of new attorneys; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and information technology.

## Where are MLAC-funded organizations?



# Client Stories

## Legal Aid Restores MassHealth Coverage



Bill, a longtime Boston resident, applied for MassHealth coverage when he retired and was approved without difficulty. Eighteen months later, he was surprised to receive a notice saying his coverage had been terminated because he had a part-time job and needed to get health coverage through his employer. But Bill had no job, part-time or otherwise. Clearly the notice was wrong.

Having worked in the health care field as a respiratory therapist, Bill thought he knew the system well enough to fix the problem quickly on his own. Day after day, he called MassHealth and tried to resolve the issue. He was transferred from one department to another, but no one seemed to be able to help him. They insisted that he was employed, despite him submitting information proving that he wasn't.

The termination notice had arrived at a daunting time for him; he was about to start a medication regimen for Hepatitis C, a disease that would be terminal without treatment. His doctors had told him that his condition was serious and that treatment couldn't wait.

"I wouldn't be here and healthy without legal aid. I'm so grateful for what they did for me."  
- Bill, a Boston resident

Knowing he might not have another chance to get treatment, he contacted Greater Boston Legal Services, where an attorney was able to investigate the problem and discover it was a mistake in the MassHealth database. Thanks to legal aid, the issue was resolved within a week. Bill started his treatment soon after and is now healthy. Said Bill, "I wouldn't be here and healthy without legal aid. I'm so grateful for what they did for me."

## Senior Finds Affordable Housing through Legal Aid

When Florynce, a Watertown senior, found out that her rent was going up by \$500 a month, she was scared. She was already spending the majority of her income on rent and knew she couldn't afford the increase. She tried to negotiate a six-month lease extension to give her time to find affordable housing. Despite that she'd been a model tenant, the property management company refused her request.

Florynce found that she qualified for senior housing through the local housing authority, but that there could be a long wait before a unit became available. As her move-out date approached with nowhere to go, Florynce faced eviction. She needed legal help, but couldn't afford a lawyer. Luckily, at her local senior center, she met an attorney from MetroWest Legal Services.

The MetroWest attorney negotiated an agreement with the property managers to extend Florynce's lease before the matter went to court. The attorney also brought her case to the director of the housing authority, who approved an emergency measure to move Florynce to the top of the waiting list. A few weeks before Florynce's lease extension expired, an apartment opened up, and she was able to move into her new home. For Florynce, legal aid made the difference, keeping her housed and preventing costly upheaval in her life.



Florynce, pictured in her new apartment in Watertown.

## REGIONAL PROGRAMS

### Eastern Region \$7,928,010 total

<b>Greater Boston Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$3,860,153
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$766,096
Disability Benefits Project	\$323,100
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$289,288
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$221,407
Fellowship	\$25,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$192,649
Immigration Relief Grant	\$75,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$961,565
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,714,258</b>

<b>Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau</b>	
Disability Benefits Project	\$4,507
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,507</b>

### Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

General Support	\$97,397
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$21,168
Disability Benefits Project	\$9,148
Immigration Relief Grant	\$37,500
Bank of America Settlement	\$24,262
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$189,475</b>

<b>MetroWest Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$563,919
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$100,556
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,116
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$61,539
Fellowship	\$50,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$27,167
Immigration Relief Grant	\$30,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$140,473
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,019,770</b>

### Central/West Region \$5,779,724 total

<b>Community Legal Aid</b>	
General Support	\$3,443,354
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$667,520
Disability Benefits Project	\$247,060
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$96,556
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$344,994
Farmworkers	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$72,500
Bank of America Settlement	\$857,740
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,779,724</b>

### Northeast Region \$3,364,581 total

<b>Children's Law Center of Massachusetts</b>	
General Support	\$168,610
Immigration Relief Grant	\$30,000
Bank of America	\$42,001
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$240,611</b>

<b>Northeast Legal Aid</b>	
General Support	\$1,811,550
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$376,396
Disability Benefits Project	\$159,208
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$214,559
Fellowship	\$51,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$60,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$451,258
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,123,970</b>

### Southeast Region \$3,555,521 total

<b>South Coastal Counties Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$2,125,895
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$422,660
Disability Benefits Project	\$172,100
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$61,136
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$144,169
Fellowship	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$50,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$529,561
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,555,521</b>

## Regional total: \$20,627,836

## STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

<b>Center for Law and Education</b>	
General Support	\$150,491
Fellowship	\$80,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$8,451
Bank of America Settlement	\$37,487
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$276,429</b>

<b>Center for Public Representation</b>	
General Support	\$255,835
Disability Benefits Project	\$35,396
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$11,127
Bank of America Settlement	\$63,728
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$366,087</b>

<b>Disability Law Center</b>	
General Support	\$300,982
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$10,606
Bank of America Settlement	\$74,975
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$568,818</b>

<b>Massachusetts Advocates for Children</b>	
General Support	\$118,888
Bank of America Settlement	\$29,615
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,503</b>

<b>Massachusetts Law Reform Institute</b>	
General Support	\$1,805,891
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$27,774
Fellowships	\$106,880
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$113,294
Website	\$331,747
Legal Answers Online Grant	\$15,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$70,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$449,848
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,003,301</b>

<b>National Consumer Law Center</b>	
General Support	\$150,491
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$75,498
Fellowship	\$75,000
Bank of America Settlement	\$37,487
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$338,476</b>

<b>PAIR Project</b>	
Immigration Relief Grant	\$60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>

<b>Prisoners' Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$195,638
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$5,949
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$201,587</b>

<b>Volunteer Lawyers Project</b>	
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$14,963
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,963</b>

## Statewide total: \$4,978,165

All grants funds are estimates based on grants approved in FY17.

# Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

for the year ending June 30, 2017

## REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$18,000,000
Attorney General's Office	
HomeCorps Program	\$1,104,902
HomeCorps Management Fees	\$38,125
Bank of America Settlement Funds	\$3,743,385
Immigration Relief Funding	\$500,000
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$4,098,884
IOLTA Administrative Fees	\$95,738
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$725,580
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$123,397
Cy Pres Awards	\$50,653
Interest and Other Income	\$105,132
Donated Legal Services	\$59,022
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$28,644,818</b>

EXPENSES	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$15,815,082					\$15,815,082
Disability Benefits Project	\$1,178,892					\$1,178,892
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$446,980					\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$2,437,264					\$2,437,264
Bank of America Settlement		\$3,700,000				\$3,700,000
HomeCorps		\$1,104,902				\$1,104,902
Immigration Relief Funding		\$485,000				\$485,000
Salaries**		\$11,222	\$434,248	\$12,355	\$615,135	\$1,072,960
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits**		\$3,000	\$110,545	\$3,911	\$158,899	\$276,355
Occupancy			\$25,981	\$79,189	\$271,226	\$376,396
Professional Services			\$622,853		\$280,146	\$902,999
Other support services			\$264,090		\$52,199	\$316,289
Fellowships			\$437,880			\$437,880
Convening Expenses					\$73,890	\$73,890
Travel			\$8,092		\$17,232	\$25,324
Office			\$1,572	\$283	\$21,493	\$23,348
Depreciation					\$51,590	\$51,590
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$19,878,218	\$5,304,124	\$1,905,261	\$95,738	\$1,541,810	\$28,725,151
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,482,788				\$(1,482,788)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$21,361,006</b>	<b>\$5,304,124</b>	<b>\$1,905,261</b>	<b>\$95,738</b>	<b>\$59,022</b>	<b>\$28,725,151</b>

MLAC directs all of its state-appropriated funds for 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 FY17 \$1,878,225 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and \$6,454 to loan forgiveness.

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

## ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2016	\$5,478,502
Net Assets released from purpose restrictions	\$(3,743,385)
FY17 Net Income or (Loss)	\$(80,833)
<b>Net Assets June 30, 2017</b>	<b>\$1,654,784</b>

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## MLAC Board of Directors

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**Rahsaan D. Hall**, Vice Chair  
American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts

**Timothy M. Linnehan**, Treasurer  
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**Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez**  
Psychiatry, Private Practice

**Timothy Lee**, Client Representative

**Edward McIntyre**  
McIntyre Mediation

**Salea Perry**, Client Representative

**Mala Rafik**  
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**Mary Jeanne Stone**  
The Law Office of Mary Jeanne Stone

**Richard Vitali**  
Vitali Law Office

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

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## MLAC Staff

Laura Booth - Director, Equal Justice Coalition

Catherine Brady - Bookkeeper

Dennis Fleury - IT Support Specialist

Rachel Glanz - Legislative Campaign Assistant; Executive Assistant

Janne Hellgren - Deputy Director

Danielle Hines-Graham - Operations Manager

Tobey Johnson - Director of Information Technology

Freddy Matute - Fiscal Manager

Evan Molinari - Communications Assistant; Legislative Campaign Assistant

Lonnie Powers - Executive Director

Michael Raabe - Director of Data and Policy Analysis

Catherine Rizos - Director of Communications

Patricia Shaughnessy - Support and Training Specialist

Donna Southwell - Senior Advisor on Data and Policy

Patricia Swansey - Program Director

Tonysha Taylor - Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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[www.mlac.org](http://www.mlac.org)