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

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.
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

232 attorneys
54 paralegals (full-time equivalents)

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?

Statewide Organizations:
Center for Law and Education
Center for Public Representation
Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts
Disability Law Center
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
National Consumer Law Center
Prisoners’ Legal Services
Volunteer Lawyers Project
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.

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.”

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.
### REGIONAL PROGRAMS

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

- **Greater Boston Legal Services**
  - General Support $3,860,153
  - Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project $766,096
  - Disability Benefits Project $323,100
  - Medicare Advocacy Project $299,288
  - Attorney General, HomeCorps $221,407
  - Fellowship $25,000
  - Technology Grants & Equipment $192,649
  - Immigration Relief Grant $75,000
  - Bank of America Settlement $961,565
  - Total $6,714,258

- **Greater Boston Legal Services**
  - Disability Benefits Project $4,507
  - Total $4,507

- **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
  - Total $189,475

- **MetroWest Legal Services**
  - 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
  - Total $1,019,770

- **Central/West Region $5,779,724 total**

- **Community Legal Aid**
  - General Support $3,443,354
  - Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project $677,520
  - 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
  - Total $5,779,724

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

- **Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts**
  - General Support $168,610
  - Immigration Relief Grant $30,000
  - Bank of America $42,001
  - Total $240,611

- **Northeast Legal Aid**
  - 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
  - Total $3,123,970

- **Southeast Region $3,555,521 total**

- **South Coastal Counties Legal Services**
  - 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
  - Total $3,555,521

### STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney General’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HomeCorps Program</td>
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<td>HomeCorps Management Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank of America Settlement Funds</td>
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<td>Immigration Relief Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts IOLTA Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts Program</td>
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<td>IOLTA Administrative Fees</td>
<td>$95,738</td>
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<td>Opt-out Bar Registration Fees</td>
<td>$725,580</td>
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<td>Pro Hac Vice Fees</td>
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<td>Cy Pres Awards</td>
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<td>Interest and Other Income</td>
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<td>Donated Legal Services</td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
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## EXPENSES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>Restricted Projects</th>
<th>Restricted Initiatives</th>
<th>IOLTA Administrative Services</th>
<th>MLAC Administrative</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants Awarded</td>
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<td>General Support</td>
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<td>Disability Benefits Project</td>
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<td>Medicare Advocacy Project</td>
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<td>Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project</td>
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<td>Bank of America Settlement Funds</td>
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<td>HomeCorps</td>
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<td>Immigration Relief Funding</td>
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<td>Salaries**</td>
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<td>Payroll taxes and fringe benefits**</td>
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<td>$110,545</td>
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<td>Occupancy</td>
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<td>Other support services</td>
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<td>Fellowships</td>
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<td>Convening Expenses</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Office</td>
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<td>Depreciation</td>
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<td>$51,590</td>
<td>$51,590</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,878,218</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,304,124</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,905,261</strong></td>
<td><strong>$95,738</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,541,810</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,725,151</strong></td>
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<td>Allocation of Administrative Expense</td>
<td>$1,482,788</td>
<td>$5,304,124</td>
<td>$1,905,261</td>
<td>$95,738</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,361,006</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,304,124</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,905,261</strong></td>
<td><strong>$95,738</strong></td>
<td><strong>$59,022</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,725,151</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets June 30, 2016</td>
<td>$5,478,502</td>
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<td>Net Assets released from purpose restrictions</td>
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<td>FY17 Net Income or (Loss)</td>
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<td><strong>Net Assets June 30, 2017</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,654,784</strong></td>
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</table>
MLAC Board of Directors

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Ropes & Gray

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The Law Office of Mary Jeanne Stone

Richard Vitali
Vitali Law Office

Geoffrey Wilson
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Catherine Brady - Bookkeeper
Dennis Fleury - IT Support Specialist
Rachel Glanz - Legislative Campaign Assistant; Executive Assistant
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Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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