



# Celebrating 35 Years of Investing in Justice

1983 - 2018



Massachusetts  
Legal  
Assistance  
Corporation



Fiscal Year 2018  
Annual Report

## 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,

This was a milestone year for legal aid in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation celebrated the 35th anniversary of its founding. It was an occasion to celebrate the remarkable collaboration of private lawyers, legal aid clients, and advocates who have sustained an unwavering commitment to providing equal access to justice for all people.

This past year, like all of MLAC's 35 years, has been characterized by seizing opportunities, rebounding from setbacks, and keeping clients at the center of our work. MLAC received level funding of \$18 million from the Massachusetts legislature. Those funds enabled legal aid organizations around the Commonwealth to close more than 22,000 cases, benefitting more than 81,000 people. MLAC also continued its stewardship of funds to provide relief to immigrants and to victims of crime suffering from related civil legal issues.

Our anniversary provided the perfect occasion to recognize a remarkable group of people who have worked for MLAC-funded organizations for 35 years or more. This extraordinary group includes 48 people, whom we recognized at our anniversary gala in June. We also noted the retirement of Lonnie Powers, MLAC's founding – and only – executive director.

Since its inception, all of MLAC's work has been conducted under Lonnie's leadership. We are deeply grateful for his service, and congratulate him on his well-earned retirement. To mark his notable career, MLAC is dedicating all the proceeds from the anniversary gala to create the Lonnie Powers Innovation Fund, which will carry the spirit of Lonnie's work into MLAC's next chapter.

Sincerely,



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



"Since its inception, all of MLAC's work has been conducted under Lonnie's leadership. We are deeply grateful for his service, and congratulate him on his well-earned retirement."

Cover photos by Kenneth Martin

# FY 2018 Accomplishments

**22,234**  
CASES CLOSED



**81,569**  
PEOPLE HELPED

**869**

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

**392**

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.

**186**

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

**MLAC-funded organizations employed**



**774**  
private attorneys

collectively donated

**40,011**  
hours

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

**\$9 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 qualified 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 receives funding from a variety of sources, primarily from the state budget and Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account funds, and disperses it 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?



# Danielle's Story

## Civil legal aid gives mother a voice - and hope

Danielle's daughter was born with sickle cell anemia, a potentially life threatening disease. After her applications for benefits were denied twice, Danielle reached out to Greater Boston Legal Services for help with what would become an eight-year legal battle for her daughter's health coverage.

When her daughter was still an infant, Danielle missed work frequently to bring her to the hospital, eventually losing her job. She applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for her daughter and was denied. She reapplied, and was denied again, this time due to an administrative error – a missing signature on the application.

Danielle found a job at the Head Start program which allowed her to care for her daughter and provide services for other families. Through that job, Danielle learned about GBLS. She reached out, and met Tara, her GBLS attorney.

Danielle and Tara fought a long battle of denials and appeals for seven years, while Danielle's daughter continued to face frequent health crises and hospitalizations. During that time, Danielle put herself through school to become a social worker, motivated to help people in similar situations to her own. After eight years, the SSI benefits were finally approved, retroactive to the original date of application, giving her daughter the medical support she needed.

"Whenever I felt out of my element and scared, Tara told me, 'We'll take care of the lawyer piece. You take care of your daughter.' It gave me a sense of security, a feeling that I had a voice," Danielle said. "GBLS and Tara never gave up on us, and that gave us hope."



"Legal aid gave me a sense of security, a feeling that I had a voice."  
- Danielle, a legal aid client

## Celebrating MLAC's first 35 years

In June, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation celebrated its 35th anniversary and honored its founding and only executive director, Lonnie Powers, upon his retirement.



The event, hosted at the Boston offices of Morgan Lewis, also honored the 48 staff members who have worked at MLAC-funded civil legal aid organizations for more than 35 years.



The celebration drew the four living Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Justices (from left) retired Chief Justices Margaret Marshall, Herbert Wilkins, and Roderick Ireland, and current Chief Justice Ralph Gants (pictured here with Lonnie Powers, second from right).

MLAC staff, June 2018. From left: Catherine Rizos, Musawir Chaudhry, Jacqueline Rayfield, Rachel Glanz, Michael Raabe, Donna Southwell, Tricia Shaughnessy, Martha Rogers, Evan Molinari, Danielle Hines-Graham, Janne Hellgren, Lonnie Powers, Tobey Johnson, Pat Swansey, Laura Booth, Tonysha Taylor.

# Fiscal Year 2018 Grants

# \$25,741,114 total

## Regional Organizations: \$20,628,116

## Statewide Organizations: \$5,112,998

### Eastern Region \$7,991,160 total

<b>Greater Boston Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$4,359,158
Disability Benefits Project	\$312,011
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$744,911
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$240,920
Fellowship	\$100,000
Technology	\$250,105
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$52,500
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$518,237
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,662,842</b>
<b>Community Legal Services and Counseling Center</b>	
General Support	\$103,238
Disability Benefits Project	\$6,497
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$15,787
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$119,409
Immigration Relief Grant	\$26,250
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$271,181</b>
<b>MetroWest Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$628,588
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,722
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$118,754
Technology	\$36,607
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$75,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$130,466
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,057,137</b>

### Central/West Region \$5,536,091 total

<b>Community Legal Aid</b>	
General Support	\$3,871,760
Disability Benefits Project	\$248,154
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$677,418
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$128,342
Farmworkers	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$61,250
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$499,167
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,536,091</b>

### Northeast Region \$3,484,981 total

<b>Northeast Legal Aid</b>	
General Support	\$2,064,500
Disability Benefits Project	\$165,141
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$389,830
Fellowship	\$50,000
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$338,233
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,134,704</b>
<b>Children's Law Center of Massachusetts</b>	
General Support	\$191,764
Fellowship	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$87,513
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$350,277</b>

### Southeast Region \$3,615,884 total

<b>South Coastal Counties Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$2,390,576
Disability Benefits Project	\$179,397
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$407,699
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$77,718
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$80,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$35,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$445,494
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,615,884</b>

<b>Center for Law and Education</b>	
General Support	\$169,676
Technology	\$10,317
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$179,993</b>

<b>Center for Public Representation</b>	
General Support	\$288,448
Disability Benefits Project	\$38,711
Technology	\$13,351
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$340,510</b>

<b>Disability Law Center</b>	
General Support	\$339,350
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256
Technology	\$14,643
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$131,380
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$667,629</b>

<b>Massachusetts Advocates for Children</b>	
General Support	\$134,040
Fellowship	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$184,040</b>

<b>Massachusetts Law Reform Institute</b>	
General Support	\$2,036,094
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868
Fellowship	\$56,097
Technology	\$142,205
Website	\$351,180
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$25,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$49,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$190,551
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,932,995</b>

<b>National Consumer Law Center</b>	
General Support	\$169,676
Fellowship	\$80,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$8,920
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$258,596</b>

<b>PAIR Project</b>	
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$70,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$112,000</b>

<b>Prisoners' Legal Services</b>	
General Support	\$220,574
Technology	\$5,075
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$225,649</b>

<b>Victim Rights Law Center</b>	
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$131,586

<b>Volunteer Lawyers Project</b>	
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$80,001

## Community Organizations: \$140,000

<b>Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees</b>	
<b>Brazilian Worker Center</b>	\$25,000
<b>Catholic Social Services of Fall River</b>	\$30,000
<b>Centro Presente</b>	\$30,000
<b>Chelsea Collaborative</b>	\$30,000
<b>Essex County Community Organization</b>	\$25,000

# Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

for the year ending June 30, 2018

## REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$18,000,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$2,776,251
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$575,000
Immigration Relief Funding	\$375,000
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$4,083,719
Cy Pres Awards	\$2,782,676
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$700,131
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$151,762
Management Fees	\$86,233
Interest and Other Income	\$109,164
Donated Legal Services	\$83,894
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$29,723,830</b>

## EXPENSES

	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$17,840,924					\$17,840,924
Disability Benefits Project	\$1,178,889					\$1,178,889
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$446,980					\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$2,437,264					\$2,437,267
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance		\$2,680,957				\$2,680,957
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants & Refugees		\$560,000				\$560,000
Immigration Relief Funding		\$350,000				\$350,000
Salaries**		\$72,052	\$552,340	\$14,399	\$631,496	\$1,270,287
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits**		\$19,309	\$137,203	\$3,391	\$145,562	\$305,465
Occupancy			\$22,053	\$67,622	\$274,847	\$364,522
Professional Services		\$23,398	\$662,095		\$382,120	\$1,067,613
Other support services		\$14,115	\$468,435		\$48,591	\$531,141
Fellowships			\$386,097			\$386,097
Travel		\$442	\$7,610		\$30,223	\$38,275
Office		\$1,414	\$1,331	\$821	\$26,352	\$29,918
Depreciation					\$40,184	\$40,184
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$21,904,060	\$3,721,687	\$2,237,164	\$86,233	\$1,579,375	\$29,528,519
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,490,917	\$4,564			\$(1,495,481)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$23,394,977</b>	<b>\$3,726,251</b>	<b>\$2,237,164</b>	<b>\$86,233</b>	<b>\$83,894</b>	<b>\$29,528,519</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 FY18 \$2,605,046 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and \$14,327 to loan forgiveness.

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

## ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2017	\$1,654,784
Net Assets released from purpose restrictions	\$1,196,059
FY18 Net Income or (Loss)	\$195,311
<b>Net Assets June 30, 2018</b>	<b>\$3,046,154</b>

## MLAC Board of Directors

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The Law Office of Mary Jeanne Stone

Richard Vitali  
Vitali Law Office

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

Alma Woodberry, Client Representative

## MLAC Staff

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Laura Booth - Director, Equal Justice Coalition

Catherine Brady - Bookkeeper

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

Martha Rogers - Data Assistant

Patricia Shaughnessy - Support and Training Specialist

Jacqueline Sullivan - Technology Support Analyst

Patricia Swansey - Program Director

Tonysha Taylor - Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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