Dear Friends of Legal Aid,

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation achieved several milestones in Fiscal Year 2019.

- We received our largest-ever state appropriation: $21 million.
- We awarded more money in grants than ever before: $29 million.
- Thirty-five years after MLAC’s founding, we welcomed our second executive director, Lynne Parker.

Thanks to the increasing state appropriation for MLAC, legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth have had greater resources to assist low-income residents facing serious legal issues. The organizations MLAC funds provide essential, high-quality representation to people struggling with problems related to consumer issues, disability rights, domestic violence, education, employment, health care, housing, immigration, opioid addiction, prisoners’ rights, public benefits, veterans’ benefits, and the well-being of older adults.

In addition to its financial support of legal aid organizations, MLAC also provides assistance through a broad range of programs and initiatives. This year, we’ve expanded the scope of our annual report to tell a more complete story of MLAC and the organizations it funds. The impact is far reaching. In addition to funding direct legal services to individual clients, MLAC funds support:

- Assistance to legal aid organizations with technology; data and research; and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives;
- Community education and know-your-rights workshops;
- A consumer website with information for self-represented litigants;
- Fellowships funding new and experienced lawyers seeking to increase legal aid in underserved communities;

The legal aid community is continually innovating to find the most effective ways to serve vulnerable people in need of civil legal services. These pages provide a glimpse at the breadth, creativity, and impact of these efforts.

Thank you for your interest and support in expanding access to legal aid and working toward a more just Commonwealth for all.

Lynne M. Parker
Executive Director

Marianne Benner Browne
Chair, Board of Directors

LYNNE PARKER joined MLAC as executive director in September 2018. Parker has more than three decades of experience advocating on behalf of low-income residents, most recently as executive director of New Hampshire Legal Assistance. A Massachusetts native, Parker holds a B.A. in political science from Mount Holyoke College and a J.D. from the University of New Hampshire School of Law. As a law student, she interned at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and later worked at Southeastern Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (now South Coastal Counties Legal Services)—both of which are MLAC-funded organizations.

She began her legal aid career representing migrant farmworkers as an attorney at Pine Tree Legal Assistance in Bangor, Maine. During her tenure at NHLA, Parker served as a staff attorney and later deputy director before becoming executive director in 2014. Throughout her career, Parker has promoted staff diversity and linguistic competence, advocated for the rights of people with limited English proficiency, and conducted outreach to underserved communities.
The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest source for civil legal aid funding in the Commonwealth.

MLAC at a Glance

Background 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.

Mission Our mission is to provide leadership and support to improve civil legal services to low-income people in Massachusetts through collaboration with the legal services community, the public, the bar, and the legislature.

Funding MLAC receives funding from a variety of sources, primarily the state budget and Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Account (IOLTA) funds, and disperses it to qualified civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

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.

About Civil Legal Aid

Civil legal aid organizations provide advice and representation at no cost to low-income people who otherwise would not receive help with serious legal issues related to housing, healthcare, immigration, employment, education, family law and domestic violence, disability, consumer problems, and elder issues. To be eligible for legal services in FY19, a family of four would have to have an annual income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level: $32,188.

Although the U.S. and Massachusetts Constitutions guarantee criminal defendants a right to counsel, most people in civil cases do not have that right, even though the consequences of civil cases can be severe: people can lose their homes, health, safety, family, and financial stability – without ever having spoken to a lawyer. Civil legal aid seeks to ensure that all residents of Massachusetts have equal access to justice.
Organizations We Fund

MLAC uses state-appropriated funds to support two different types of civil legal aid organizations: regional and statewide.

**REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Regional Organizations help people from a particular geographic area resolve a variety of types of civil legal problems related to housing, health care, public benefits, immigration, domestic violence, and other serious issues.

- Community Legal Aid serves western and central Massachusetts.
- De Novo Center for Justice and Healing serves Boston, Cambridge, and interior suburbs of Boston.
- Greater Boston Legal Services serves the Greater Boston area.
- MetroWest Legal Services, serves the MetroWest region.
- Northeast Legal Aid serves Essex and Northern Middlesex Counties.
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services serves Cape Cod, the Islands, and Southeastern Massachusetts.

**STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS**

Statewide Organizations specialize in specific subjects or types of law. They also provide support to the regional organizations.

- Center for Law and Education provides expertise on education-related cases.
- Center for Public Representation enforces and expands the rights of people with disabilities and others who are in segregated settings.
- Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts advocates for the rights of young people.
- Disability Law Center is the Protection and Advocacy agency for Massachusetts, protecting the rights of people with disabilities.
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children represents children, students, and youth who face significant barriers because of their economic status, disability, race, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, language, and/or traumatic life experiences.
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute provides statewide advocacy and leadership in advancing laws, policies, and practices that secure economic, racial, and social justice for low-income people and communities.
- National Consumer Law Center advises on consumer law issues, including student loans, debt collection, disaster protection, mortgages, and consumer protection.
- Political Asylum/Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project provides legal services to asylum seekers and promotes the rights of detained immigrants.
- Prisoners’ Legal Services protects the health and civil rights of people who are incarcerated.
- Veterans Legal Services promotes the self-sufficiency, stability, and financial security of homeless and low-income veterans.
- Victim Rights Law Center helps victims with legal issues in the areas of privacy, safety, housing, education, employment, immigration, LGBTQ issues, criminal justice advocacy, and financial stability.
- Volunteer Lawyers Project provides volunteer lawyers, paralegals, and law students—led by staff attorneys—to give equal access to representation to the people of Greater Boston.

Thousands of low-income families rely on public benefits to make ends meet and keep their children healthy. Unfortunately, for years, Massachusetts did not provide additional benefits to families with children conceived or born after the family started receiving assistance. This cap on the number of children the state counted when calculating benefits forced larger families to stretch their modest resources farther and perpetuated extreme poverty.

In 2018, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and Greater Boston Legal Services led a coalition of more than 100 anti-poverty organizations in a legislative campaign to lift the cap and improve the lives of low-income kids. The coalition secured overwhelming support in the legislature, which voted in the spring of 2019 to lift the cap. This advocacy will improve the lives of 8,700 children living in poverty in Massachusetts. MLRI advocate Deborah Harris, who championed the effort, said that with this vote, “Massachusetts has affirmed the dignity and humanity of every child.”
Wide Range of Services

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS
Civil legal aid plays a crucial role in protecting and securing safe and affordable housing by:
• Enforcing health, safety, and accessibility standards
• Advocating for reforms that promote access to affordable housing
• Defending clients from unlawful eviction and housing discrimination
• Protecting tenants at risk of losing housing subsidies
• Helping place vulnerable families in emergency shelters

IMMIGRATION
Civil legal aid lawyers assist immigrants and refugees by:
• Ensuring fair treatment and due process
• Assisting individuals navigating DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status)
• Educating people on their rights and responsibilities
• Helping people secure the right to live and work in the U.S. legally

EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SERVICES
Civil legal aid organizations conduct policy advocacy on behalf of workers in partnership with unions, workers’ groups, and social service providers. Civil legal aid helps low-income people who have experienced:
• Wage theft
• Employment discrimination
• Unsafe working conditions or unfair labor standards
• Improper denial of unemployment compensation

FAMILY LAW & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Civil legal aid helps families maintain their safety and independence by:
• Providing advice and representation and enforcing legal protections for survivors of domestic violence
• Securing favorable property settlements and preventing foreclosure and eviction
• Enforcing divorce and child support orders
• Addressing denial of benefits

HEALTH CARE
Civil legal aid ensures that low-income residents have access to health care by:
• Identifying and correcting administrative and insurance errors that jeopardize access to treatment
• Addressing the improper reduction of benefits and appealing the denial of coverage for life-sustaining medications or procedures
• Advocating for children, immigrants, asylum seekers, older adults, people with mental illness, and others so that they can make the best medical decisions for themselves and their families

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS
In these partnerships civil legal aid attorneys work alongside medical professionals and help address the root cause of an illness. For example, while a doctor can treat the symptoms of a child’s breathing problems caused by mold in their apartment, a legal aid lawyer can help ensure the landlord complies with public health and safety laws and regulations

CHILDREN & EDUCATION
• Ensuring services for children in schools
• Protecting the rights of children and other vulnerable individuals

OPIOID CRISIS
Legal aid addresses not only the consequences of opioid addiction but also helps promote stability, recovery, and independence for people struggling with addiction and their families. Civil legal aid lawyers help:
• Resolve family law issues, including child abuse and neglect, child support, custody, and guardianship
• Ensure people can receive health care and treatment;
• Help family remain in stable housing
• Protect older adults from financial risk posed by relatives living with addiction

In MLPs, legal aid lawyers work alongside doctors to remedy the root cause of an illness.

Client Story

HOME SAVED FROM THE BRINK OF FORECLOSURE
Fred and his wife, Rose, bought their house in Quincy in 1978. Fred renovated it himself, transforming what was once a summer cottage into a year-round house.

While working as a teacher at a vocational high school, Fred broke up a fight between two students and was pushed into some equipment, resulting in three herniated disks. The injury prevented Fred from working for many years. Not long after Fred’s injury, Rose lost her job, and Fred’s son was diagnosed with cancer. The family struggled to make mortgage payments. Fred tried to refinance, but without success, and received a foreclosure notice.

Desperate for help, they came to Greater Boston Legal Services. GBLS attorney Todd Kaplan worked over two and a half years to help the family get their house back. Todd eventually negotiated a plan for Fred to repurchase the house. With his back beginning to heal, Fred returned to work with his son at a contracting company. He is thankful to Greater Boston Legal Services. “What these people do is nothing short of amazing,” Fred said, “I want other people to be able to get the help that I did.”
FY19 by the Numbers

Cases Funded

37,267
Total Cases handled by MLAC-funded organizations

1,927 Cases handled by the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, addressing physical safety, child custody and support, and health care coverage

1,554 Cases handled by the Disability Benefits Project, securing federal SSI/SSDI benefits for elderly residents and those with long-term disabilities

289 Cases handled by the Medicare Advocacy Project, assisting elders and people with disabilities

Client Demographics

88,000 people benefitted

Age of Clients

- 61% 18-59 yrs
- 22% over 60 yrs
- 10% under 18 yrs
- 7% unknown

Racial Background

- 39% White non-Hispanic
- 30% Hispanic
- 19% Black non-Hispanic
- 6% Other
- 5% Asian Pacific Islander
- 1% Native American

Issue Areas

- 33% Housing
- 20% Individual Rights
- 12% Income Maintenance
- 11% Family
- 9% Education
- 6% Consumers/Finance
- 3% Health
- 3% Miscellaneous
- 2% Employment
- 1% Juvenile

Percentage Served

- 62% of MA cities and towns had at least 10 people with cases handled by a civil legal aid organization
- 94% of MA cities and towns had at least one person with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

The 6 percent of towns that did not have a single person helped by civil legal aid in fiscal year 2019 are among the least populous in Massachusetts.

Pro Bono Attorneys

- 2,489 private attorneys collectively accepted
- 4,660 cases through legal aid organizations on behalf of low-income residents
- $16.6M in value from 73,802 hours of pro bono work

Full-Time Staff

- 279 Attorneys
- 62 Paralegals
$69M in Economic Benefits

People who receive legal aid see many positive results in their lives and livelihoods. They may have benefits restored, housing preserved, or receive protection from an abusive partner. Those benefits create a ripple effect in families, communities, and the Commonwealth. In FY 2019, civil legal aid organizations funded by MLAC provided more than $69 million in economic benefits to the Commonwealth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Benefits to Clients by Case Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$11,070,469 Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$9,319,718 Income Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,832,091 Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,784,818 Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,202,415 Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,682,165 Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,807,432 Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>$1,672,500 Individual Rights: Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>$884,931 Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$191,250 Misc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$38,125 Individual Rights/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL = $53,485,914</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reimbursements &amp; Savings to the Commonwealth</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$13,810,106 Homeless Prevention: Family Shelter Costs Saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,235,36 Domestic Violence Prevention: Health Care Costs Saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$176,940 EAEDC Reimbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL = $16,222,411</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Online Help for All

MassLegalHelp.org is a website created to help people find practical information about their legal rights. The website is a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts civil legal aid community. Funded by MLAC, the website is maintained by lawyers at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.

The site’s mission is to use the web in new and creative ways to improve access to justice for low-income and disadvantaged people. Written by people in the legal services community, the website connects, supports and educates the general public.

The most frequently visited pages contained information about landlord-tenant issues, SNAP (food stamp) eligibility, debt, and child custody.

MASSLEGALHELP.ORG RECEIVED NEARLY
4M visits IN FY'19 WITH 399,615 SESSIONS

ENGLISH, CHINESE, HAITIAN CREOLE, PORTUGUESE, RUSSIAN, SPANISH, AND VIETNAMESE.
“Civil legal aid is not only a moral obligation; it is a sound investment”

- CHIEF JUSTICE RALPH GANTS

Hundreds Rally for Funding Civil Legal Aid

Attorneys, law students, and bar association leaders packed the Massachusetts State House Hall of Flags for the 20th Annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid. Led by Chief Justice Ralph Gants of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, more than 650 people assembled at the Equal Justice Coalition’s annual lobby day to advocate for a state budget increase for civil legal aid organizations in Massachusetts.

Since 1999, the Equal Justice Coalition has advocated for state funding for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. Founded by MLAC, the Massachusetts Bar Association, and the Boston Bar Association, the coalition educates the public and the legislature about the vital role of civil legal aid and coordinates statewide efforts to secure equal access to justice for all.

“Civil legal aid is not only a moral obligation; it is a sound investment,” said Chief Justice Gants, noting the money invested in legal aid yields savings for the Commonwealth by preventing homelessness, saving medical costs, and recouping federal benefits.

Louis Tompros, Chair of the EJC and partner at WilmerHale, said: “We recognize that equal access to the legal system—regardless of ability to pay—is a necessary condition to a free and just society... If we are serious about liberty and justice for all, it is up to us to make it a reality.”

Lynne Parker, MLAC executive director, said that while the economy is improving for some, there is still a serious need for legal assistance: “Increases in housing costs often drive struggling tenants farther from their jobs. A job layoff, a medical emergency, the denial of hard-earned benefits, or the loss of health insurance can often be catastrophic to individuals and families who are already struggling to make ends meet. Access to civil legal aid can make all the difference.”

> Ralph Gants, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, delivers his remarks at Walk to the Hill bottom right.
Fellowships

MLAC funds two fellowships for recent law school graduates and for more seasoned attorneys interested in expanding the delivery of legal services in traditionally underserved communities.

The Racial Justice Fellowship was created in 2006 to expand the reach of legal aid in communities that have had difficulty obtaining access to the justice system or legal services due to linguistic or cultural barriers. The goal of the fellowship is to use systemic advocacy and other strategies to address pervasive problems of racial injustice. The Racial Justice Fellowship funds two two-year positions at legal aid organizations in Massachusetts.

The Bart Gordon Fellowship, named in honor of Springfield attorney and founding MLAC board member Bart J. Gordon who passed away in 1995, helps legal aid organizations enhance their services by providing funding to hire recent law school graduates equipped to assist underserved communities. The fellowship, for which MLAC-funded legal aid organizations compete each year, provides financial support to qualified new attorneys. Four Gordon Fellows are funded each year for a one-year term, with an option to renew for a second year.

“I allowed me the opportunity to work with elite legal services programs to conduct racial justice work on behalf of marginalized and exploited communities.”

SHERLEY CRUZ
Assistant Professor
Advocacy Clinic, University of Tennessee College of Law
Former Bart Gordon Fellow at Greater Boston Legal Services and Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005-2007

IMPROVED ACADEMICS FOR HUNDREDS OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Immigrant students in a large, urban public school district on the North Shore are receiving new or enhanced academic services following a civil rights action initiated by lawyers with the Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts and the Center for Law and Education. A two-year investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice examined discriminatory practices that were harming students who were English Language Learners, as well as immigrant students with limited educations due to significant interruptions in their schooling – known as “SLIFE” students. The U.S. Attorney’s investigation led to a comprehensive settlement with the school district requiring it to hire additional, well-trained staff to ensure that ELL and SLIFE students have equal access to the school’s regular curriculum services; to furnish ELL assistance that satisfies state mandates; and to implement quality assurance protocols to make good on its obligations. The agreement also guarantees that immigrant students can participate in extra-curricular activities, including sports and other events. Consistent with the agreement, the district will report to DOJ, which will have monitoring oversight for two years. The case is a significant victory for immigrant youth, in particular for hundreds of ELL and SLIFE students. Among other favorable outcomes, the settlement is expected to improve graduation rates and students’ short and long-term career prospects.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT RECOGNIZES WORKERS’ RIGHT TO OVERTIME PAY

Ana and 14 other employees worked long hours for little pay at a food processing facility on a farm in South Deerfield. Sometimes they worked up to 70 hours a week cleaning, inspecting, and packaging bean sprouts, but they never received overtime pay. For years, their employer—which has a history of violating labor laws—insisted that the workers were agricultural laborers, and therefore did not have a right to overtime compensation. The workers received legal aid from the Central West Justice Center, a subsidiary of Community Legal Aid. CWJC staff attorneys argued that the employees were factory workers, and had a right to overtime pay. After receiving an unfavorable Superior Court decision, CWJC appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, which ruled that the workers do have a right to overtime pay, and Ana and her colleagues will be compensated for their past work. CWJC Managing Attorney Leticia Medina-Richman said the decision “brings clarity about what constitutes fair compensation for the many hours worked by those performing the kinds of tasks that the plaintiffs performed.”

Case Spotlights

SHERLEY CRUZ
Assistant Professor
Advocacy Clinic, University of Tennessee College of Law
Former Bart Gordon Fellow at Greater Boston Legal Services and Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005-2007
Special Projects

In addition to providing funding, MLAC supports legal aid organizations with a range of services and programs.

THE GREATER BOSTON IMMIGRANT DEFENSE FUND is a partnership of the city of Boston, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, MLAC, and a group of foundations to support legal aid and community organizations that provide legal representation and information to immigrants facing deportation.

The GBIDF works to increase access to legal services and legal information to defend immigrant communities, refugees, and temporary status holders. It was launched in 2017 by MLAC, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, foundation partners, and MLRI as a two-year pilot program, awarding more than $13 million to legal aid and community organizations. The fund is committed to building the capacity of Eastern Massachusetts to protect and defend immigrant and refugee communities by increasing legal representation for individuals facing deportation proceedings who cannot afford a lawyer. It also provides community education and preparedness programming.

THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE spurs legal aid organizations to reflect the diversity of their clients and employees; justice and fairness, through education and training, improved hiring practices, statewide events, and collaboration.

In May, MLAC hosted “Hiring for Diversity: Best Practices for the Successful Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention of Attorneys of Color.” Featuring guest speaker April English—assistant Attorney General and Chief of Organization, Development, and Diversity with the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office—this event reaffirmed MLAC’s commitment to encouraging the organizations it funds to hire staff members from racially diverse backgrounds. It also provided practical advice on how to promote equity in the hiring process and retain more attorneys of color.

The Statewide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council is led by Tonsya Taylor, MLAC’s director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It encourages transparency and communication between MLAC and the organizations it funds and promotes solutions to persistent inequities.

The DEI initiative serves low-income clients by building cultural competence, addressing diversity issues, and promoting equity within MLAC and the organizations it funds.

The CIVIL LEGAL AID FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME INITIATIVE helps victims of crime throughout Massachusetts with their related civil legal problems—including family law, housing, immigration, disability rights, child welfare, education, consumer, identity theft, employment rights and public benefits.

Crime victims often experience difficult civil legal problems. For example, a victim of an assault may be unable to work, leading to financial distress including eviction and debt collection. Or, a survivor of domestic violence may need legal help to get a divorce and child support. Volunteer Lawyers Project and the National Consumer Law Center provide training and support. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation also provide training, support and project coordination.

Nine civil legal aid organizations provide direct legal services to victims of crime through this initiative: Community Legal Aid, De Novo, Greater Boston Legal Services, MetroWest Legal Services, Northeast Legal Aid, South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Children’s Law Center, Disability Law Center, and Victim Rights Law Center.

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Award Winners

Across the state, legal aid lawyers and staff were recognized with honors for their longstanding and high-quality work on behalf of legal aid clients.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD

The Massachusetts Bar Association recognized three legal aid lawyers with Access to Justice awards.

Award Winners

**Judith Liben**

For more than 30 years, Judith Liben has advocated for tenants’ rights and housing access. Working at MLRI since 1989, Liben has testified on Capitol Hill and Beacon Hill, successfully urging lawmakers to pass the federal Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act and similar legislation in Massachusetts. She also lobbied state housing officials to institute a lottery system for low-income applicants to the Section 8 program.

**Gina Plata-Nino**

Gina Plata-Nino, a staff attorney at the Central West Justice Center, a subsidiary of Community Legal Aid, represents food insecure clients with disabilities, language differences, or other difficulties who are applying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. She has also helped residents of Puerto Rico displaced by Hurricane Maria. Plata-Nino is co-founder and president of the Oon Jai Foundation, which seeks to alleviate poverty in Southeast Asia.

**Luz Arévalo**

Luz Arévalo oversees the Low-Income Tax Clinic at GBLS. She has been involved in legislative efforts to reform state tax policies and was instrumental in the recent passage of legislation extending innocent-spouse relief to joint tax filers and in a first-of-its kind effort allowing domestic violence victims to safely have access to the Earned Income Tax Credit.

LEILA J. ROBINSON AWARD

The Women’s Bar Association of Massachusetts presented its 2019 Leila J. Robinson Award to Deborah Harris of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. She specializes in public benefits and child support issues and has worked extensively in welfare practice and policy for over 40 years. She was lead counsel in MLRI’s lawsuit that stopped Massachusetts from using stale and erroneous wage records to terminate SNAP benefits and obtained an order against the Commonwealth to pay $9.4 million in SNAP benefits to 17,000 households whose benefits were illegally terminated. She is a published author whose works include the TAFDC Advocacy Guide: An Advocate’s Guide to Massachusetts Welfare Rules for Families which was first published by MCLE in 1994 and has been republished every year since.

Harris’s work has encompassed numerous class action and individual lawsuits challenging state or federal welfare rules denying benefits or services as well as advocacy to persuade Congress and the state legislature and state and federal agencies to adopt policies to protect vulnerable populations and promote economic stability. Recently, she helped lead the successful campaign to repeal the welfare family cap.

Her work led to $9.4M in SNAP benefits to 17,000 households whose benefits were illegally terminated.

REGINALD HEBER SMITH AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL SERVICES

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly awarded the Central West Justice Center, a subsidiary of Community Legal Aid, its 2019 Reginald Heber Smith Award for Excellence in Legal Services. The Central West Justice Center provides free legal help to low-income and elderly residents of central and western Massachusetts. CWJC’s advocates focus on cases involving humanitarian-based immigration law, employment rights, housing and homelessness issues, and access to public benefits.

Among many notable contributions to pro bono, Shaw has served as the supervising attorney for the Western Mass. Housing Court Lawyer for the Day program for 20 years. Motivated by the challenges economically and socially disadvantaged populations face trying to obtain meaningful access to our legal system, Shaw has spent the majority of his legal career working on ways to enhance access to justice. Among his proudest accomplishment is the creation of the Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder, www.masslrf.org, one of the first online legal resource triage tools in the country.

PRO BONO EXCELLENCE IN THE LAW AWARD

Gordon P. Shaw, director of client access at Community Legal Aid won the 2019 Pro Bono Excellence in the Law Award given by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly.

Her work led to $9.4M in SNAP benefits to 17,000 households whose benefits were illegally terminated.
MLAC Team

MLAC STAFF

Lynne Parker  
Executive Director

Tenzin Bayul  
Executive Assistant

Laura Booth  
Director, Equal Justice Coalition

Catherine Brady  
Bookkeeper

Grace Coughlin  
Legislative Campaign Associate

Michelle Deakin  
Director of Communications

Janne Hellgren  
Deputy Director

Danielle Hines-Graham  
Operations Manager

Tobey Johnson  
Director of Information Technology

Freddy Matute  
Fiscal Manager

Evan Molinari  
Communications Associate

Shamika Naidu  
Grants Manager

Michael Raabe  
Director of Data and Policy Analysis

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marijane Benner Browne, Chair  
Director of lateral partner recruiting, Ropes & Gray LLP, Boston

Geoffrey Wilson, Vice Chair  
Retired Presiding Justice of the Franklin County Probate and Family Court

Timothy M. Linnehan, Treasurer  
Coordinator of Alternative Dispute Resolution Services, Executive Office of the Trial Court, Boston

Guillermo Gonzalez  
Psychiatrist in private practice, former medical director, Center for Health and Human Services, Inc., New Bedford

Rahsaan Hall  
Director of the Racial Justice Program, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Boston

Thank You

At the end of FY19, MLAC said goodbye to two long-serving members of its Board of Directors, Dr. Guillermo Gonzales and Rahsaan Hall. They made tremendous contributions to MLAC, and we are extremely grateful for their many years of service.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court appointed Guillermo Gonzalez to the board in 2014. A licensed psychiatrist in private practice, he had served as medical director of the Center for Health and Human Services, Inc., in New Bedford. Also a New Bedford resident, Gonzalez had served on the board of South Coastal Counties Legal Services from 2006 to 2011.

Rahsaan Hall served on the MLAC board for 10 years, starting in 2009. He is the Director of the Racial Justice Program for the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

He served two terms as the board’s chair and was a leader in securing increased funding for civil legal aid during his tenure. Hall previously served as the Deputy Director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights where he practiced since 2008. Prior to joining the Lawyers Committee, he served as an Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County.

MLAC extends its gratitude to both board members for their long and distinguished service.

Client Story

Fleeing Danger, Mother and Son Receive Asylum

Carmen feared for her life when she fled violence in El Salvador and journeyed with her young son to the United States. Unfortunately, their arrival brought new challenges. U.S. immigration officials detained them and began deportation proceedings. Unless she prevailed in court, they would likely be forced to return to El Salvador, where Carmen feared they might be tortured or killed.

Defendants in immigration court do not have a right to an attorney, so Carmen faced the prospect of navigating a complex court system in an unfamiliar language alone.

The stress Carmen experienced turned into severe depression. A psychotherapist referred Carmen to MetroWest Legal Services attorney Katie Condon Grace, who works at the health center through a Medical Legal Partnership. Katie determined that Carmen and her son had a strong claim for asylum.

Katie represented Carmen and her son in Boston immigration court. After more than a year of advocacy, a judge granted them asylum. Now legal permanent residents, they can live without fear of the violence they faced in El Salvador.

Carmen credits Katie for changing the course of her life. “For me she is not just my lawyer. She is a part of my family.”

“...a part of my family...”

— Carmen, left, with Katie
## Fiscal Year 2019

### Grant Allocation

#### STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>General Support</th>
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#### REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**GRAND TOTAL**                                    $29,023,186
### Fiscal Year 2019

#### Activities & Changes in Net Assets

**REVENUE**

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation: $21,040,000
- Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance: $3,937,226
- Massachusetts IOLTA Committee
  - Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program: $6,619,294
  - Cy Pres Awards: $241,850
  - Opt-out Bar Registration Fees: $881,329
  - Pro Hac Vice Fees: $169,676
  - Management Fees: $101,707
- Interest and Other Income: $183,038
- Net assets released from purpose restrictions: $1,015,000
- Donated Legal Services: $50,594

**TOTAL**: $34,239,754

**EXPENSES**

- General Support
  - $19,901,049 General Support
  - $1,178,892 Disability Benefits Project
  - $446,980 Medicare Advocacy Project
  - $2,437,268 Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project
  - $1,584,558 Administrative Expense
  - **TOTAL: $25,584,747**

- Restricted Projects
  - $3,843,743 MA Office for Victim Asst. Grant
  - $950,000 Immigration Relief Funding Grant
  - $80,863 Salaries
  - $23,390 Payroll taxes & fringe benefits
  - $28,135 Professional Services
  - $14,281 Other support services
  - $121 Travel
  - $1,445 Office & other
  - **TOTAL: $4,952,226**

- IOLTA Administrative Services: $98,707
- Program support initiatives: $2,293,213
- MLAC Administrative (after allocation): $50,594

**TOTAL**: $32,943,487

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“Legal aid really saved our lives.”

Mindy, survivor of domestic violence represented by Community Legal Aid