Fiscal Year 2020 was unlike any other for MLAC.

As it was for so many people and organizations, the year was upended by the COVID-19 crisis. MLAC played a pivotal role in helping legal aid organizations respond to the crisis, providing the vital infrastructure that connects the network of civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. FY20 began on a positive note. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts appropriated $24 million for civil legal aid in its annual budget. Through its grant-funding process, MLAC distributed that money to 16 statewide and regional legal aid organizations. In addition to the state appropriation, MLAC receives money from Interest on Lawyers Trust Account funds, as well as from government grants and private foundations. In FY20, MLAC received more than $7.3 million from IOLTA interest funds. Government grants, including funds for assistance to victims of crime and for assistance to indigent immigrants, totaled more than $5.7 million. That funding enabled MLAC to distribute grants to nine additional organizations. In total, MLAC distributed $32,642,186 in FY20. The funds MLAC distributed enabled legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth to benefit more than 95,000 Massachusetts residents with serious civil legal issues, including issues related to housing, employment and unemployment, family law and domestic violence, immigrant rights, public benefits, consumer protection, and education.

When the pandemic descended on Massachusetts in the last quarter of the year, legal aid organizations saw a surge in people seeking unemployment benefits, staying off eviction, and appealing denial of SNAP benefits. In addition to working with individual clients, the legal aid community engaged in systemic advocacy to help create and then extend a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, to advocate for increases to public benefits for food and shelter, and to enact emergency provisions for the unemployed. Legal aid worked with bar associations and the Access to Justice Commission of the Supreme Judicial Court to encourage more private attorneys to provide pro bono services. The legal aid community also expanded the resources on its public websites to help people address unexpected legal needs brought on by the pandemic.

The pandemic illustrated how essential legal aid is to safeguarding people during a fast-moving crisis that left vulnerable people in jeopardy of losing access to their most basic protections. Across the Commonwealth, legal aid lawyers continually demonstrated their dedication, innovation, and impact in the face of unprecedented need.

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

Sincerely,

Dear Friends of 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 FY20, a family of four would have to have an annual income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level: $32,750.

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.

MLAC at a Glance

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest source for civil legal aid funding in the Commonwealth.

**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.

**MLAC REVENUE SOURCES (FY 2020)**

- $24 million: state appropriation
- $7.3 million: IOLTA
- $5.7 million: grants and other revenue

**TOTAL OF GRANTS AWARDED BY MLAC IN FY 2020**

$32,642,186

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.
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.

Last year, 14 employees of Happy Lamb Hot Pot—a restaurant chain with locations in Boston and Cambridge—alleged that the restaurant withheld their tips, did not pay the minimum wage or overtime, had unsafe working conditions, and threatened and retaliated against workers who complained. Some employees suffered burns and injuries from the forced use of cleaning chemicals, and one employee was threatened with a knife.

The Asian Outreach Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services partners with the Chinese Progressive Association—a community organization—to host legal clinics so workers can learn about their rights. Bethany Li, an attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, took the Happy Lamb Hot Pot workers’ case and sought more than $800,000 in damages on their behalf. In the summer of 2019, she reached a settlement with the restaurant that was satisfactory to her clients—an outcome likely impossible without legal representation. Wage theft is a persistent problem for many low-wage workers in Massachusetts. Low-income individuals and immigrants are particularly vulnerable to unlawful reduction of wages, benefits, and tips at the hands of some unscrupulous employers. Often victims fear that asserting their right to be fairly compensated for their labor will jeopardize their position.

“A lot of workers can feel like there’s no point and they’re scared. It’s incredible that, in this current climate, workers are willing to assert their rights to work in an environment that’s fair and safe,” Li said.
Wide Range of Services

Civil legal advocates help people of all ages address many vital issues.

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

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

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

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

OLDER ADULTS
Legal aid lawyers help older adults facing issues related to:
• Housing and physical safety
• Access to health care, disability benefits, medicare, social security, Veterans benefits, and other public benefits
• Bankruptcy, financial abuse, and other consumer law challenges
• Guardianship, care of children and grandchildren, and other family law issues
• Durable powers of attorney and health care proxies
• Nursing home issues, including transfer and discharge, conditions and evictions

23% of legal aid clients in FY 20 were 60 or older.
FY 2020 by the Numbers

Cases Funded

41,585
Total Cases handled by MLAC-funded organizations

1,485 Cases handled by the Disability Benefits Project, securing federal SSI/SSDI benefits for elderly residents and those with long-term disabilities

1,886 Cases handled by the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, addressing physical safety, child custody and support, and health care coverage

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

Client Demographics

95,000 people benefitted

Age of Clients

- 69% 18-59
- 23% 60 and older
- 8% under 18

- 37% White non-Hispanic
- 29% Hispanic
- 22% Black non-Hispanic
- 6% Other
- 5% Asian
- 1% Native American

Racial Identity

Issue Areas

- 32% Housing
- 18% Individual Rights
- 17% Income Maintenance
- 12% Family
- 7% Consumer/Finance
- 6% Education
- 3% Employment
- 2% Miscellaneous
- 2% Health
- 1% Juvenile

Locations Served

64% of MA cities and towns had at least 10 people with cases handled by a civil legal aid organization

96% of MA cities and towns had at least one person with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

The 4% of towns that did not have a single person helped by civil legal aid in fiscal year 2020 are among the least populous in Massachusetts.

Pro Bono Attorneys

2,332 private attorneys collectively accepted

4,544 cases through legal aid organizations on behalf of low-income residents

+$15.5M in value from 69,318 hours of pro bono work

Full-Time Staff

320 Attorneys
65 Paralegals

Total Cases handled by MLAC-funded organizations

$15.5M in value from 69,318 hours of pro bono work

Pro Bono Attorneys

2,332 private attorneys collectively accepted

4,544 cases through legal aid organizations on behalf of low-income residents

+$15.5M in value from 69,318 hours of pro bono work

Full-Time Staff

320 Attorneys
65 Paralegals

The 4% of towns that did not have a single person helped by civil legal aid in fiscal year 2020 are among the least populous in Massachusetts.
FY20 Economic Benefits

Total Economic Benefit to the Commonwealth and its residents: $115 million

FY20 Economic Benefits to Clients

- $3,834,991 Consumer
- $4,050,334 Education
- $9,405,516 Employment
- $2,057,131 Family
- $8,473,512 Health
- $99,232,961 Misc.

TOTAL: $115,054,407 includes Benefits to Commonwealth + Benefits to Clients

FY20 Reimbursements and Savings to the Commonwealth

- $13,838,346 was in homelessness prevention resulting in family shelter costs saved.
- $1,779,074 was Domestic Violence Prevention resulting in health care costs saved.
- $204,026 was Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) funds reimbursed to Massachusetts.

TOTAL: $15,821,446 in reimbursements and savings to the Commonwealth.

Online Help for All

MLAC provides annual funding for MassLegalHelp.org, a website to help people find practical information about their legal rights. The website is a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts civil legal aid community, maintained by staff at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. The site’s mission is to use the web to improve access to justice for low-income and disadvantaged people. Written by advocates in the legal services community, the website connects, supports, and educates the general public. After mid-March, visits to the site more than doubled, as people sought information on unemployment benefits, housing rights, and other legal issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

MassLegalHelp.org RECEIVED MORE THAN 4.05M VISITS

Security deposits
Unemployment
Medical necessity for electricity
Housing issues & housing codes
Food stamps
Child support

MassLegalHelp.org

Providing legal help in 7 languages: English, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese.

Most Visited Pages:
- COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits
- COVID-19 and extra Emergency SNAP Benefits: What you need to know
- Your Right To Take Off From Work For Personal or Family Needs
- COVID-19 & Housing

Users by age:
- 10% 18-24
- 31% 25-34
- 16% 45-54
- 14% 55-64
- 20% 35-44
- 9% 65+

Top Google searches that brought people to the site

FY20 Reimbursements and Savings to the Commonwealth

- $6,218,444 Housing
- $6,950,847 Income Maintenance
- $6,600,000 Individual Rights: Disability
- $3,040,341 Individual Rights: Immigration

TOTAL: $15,821,446 in reimbursements and savings to the Commonwealth.
Equal Justice Coalition

Hundreds Rally for Increase in Civil Legal Aid Funding

Attorneys, law students, leaders of the private bar, and advocates rallied at the Massachusetts State House for the 21st Annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid in January. Chief Justice Ralph Gants of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and approximately 700 people—lawyers from nearly 40 firms and companies, law students, and legal aid staff—assembled for the Equal Justice Coalition’s annual lobby day to advocate for a $5 million state budget increase for civil legal aid.

Founded by MLAC, the Massachusetts Bar Association, and the Boston Bar Association in 1999, the Equal Justice Coalition advocates for state funding for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. The coalition—which includes bar associations, faith-based organizations, and social service agencies—educates the public and the legislature about the vital role of civil legal aid and coordinates statewide efforts to expand equal access to justice for all.

“You speak not for yourselves, but for all those who have neither money nor power, but who might have the law on their side, if only they knew how to use it,” said Chief Justice Gants, who also noted that investing in legal aid saves the state money in the long run.

Civil legal aid “makes a long-term difference in the lives of low-income residents in the Commonwealth,” said Lynne Parker, MLAC executive director. "One of the greatest strengths of legal aid advocates is their expertise, their capacity to confront and overcome the challenges that face our clients – life-threatening housing conditions, homelessness, domestic violence, deportation, loss of employment, elder abuse and neglect.”

Kenda Cluff, a mother of four young children and a client of South Coastal Counties Legal Services, an organization that receives MLAC funding, described how legal aid lawyers helped her end an abusive marriage, gain sole custody of her children, and prevail in a lawsuit filed by her former in-laws seeking her share of the divorce settlement. "I know there are many people out there who are desperate to get out of awful situations like mine,” Cluff said. “The work these legal aid lawyers do is so important. It has a generational effect. My children’s lives are completely changed because of the help we received from legal aid. Without legal aid, my three daughters would think abuse is acceptable. My son would think it is okay to be abandoned or to abandon. I’ve given them new opportunity to move into a different direction in life.”


**Equal Justice Coalition**

**Beacon of Justice Awards**

The Equal Justice Coalition presented Beacon of Justice awards at the Massachusetts State House on November 12, 2019 to individuals who made a significant contribution to advocating for state funding for civil legal aid. The EJC honored nine legislators and four attorneys who demonstrated exceptional leadership in the effort to expand civil legal aid for low-income residents:

- Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge)
- Sen. Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth)
- Sen. Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett)
- Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton)
- Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier (D-Pittsfield)
- Rahsaan Hall, director of the Racial Justice Program at the Massachusetts ACLU and former chair of the MLAC Board of Directors
- Marty Healy, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Legal Officer, Massachusetts Bar Association
- Rep. Ronald Mariano (D-Quincy)
- Rep. Aaron Michlewitz (D-Boston)
- Lon Pavich, Counsel at Anderson & Kreiger and former Chief Legal Counsel to Governor Charlie Baker
- Sen. Michael Rodrigues (D-Westport)
- J.D. Smeallie, Partner at Holland & Knight and former Boston Bar Association President
- Rep. Todd Smola (R-Palmer)

The Equal Justice also recognized past recipients of the Beacon of Justice Award and all legislators who supported amendments to increase the MLAC line item in the previous state budget process.

“Through their efforts to increase funding for civil legal aid, these legislators and lawyers have shown tremendous leadership in their support for access to justice for all residents of the Commonwealth.”

LYNNE PARKER, MLAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

**Special Projects**

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

- **THE CENTRAL TECHNOLOGY PROJECT**
- **GREATER BOSTON IMMIGRANT DEFENSE FUND**
- **IMMIGRATION LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND**
- **THE CIVIL LEGAL AID FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**
- **THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE**

**Strengthening Technology**

The Central Technology Project seeks to standardize technology for MLAC-funded legal aid organizations in Massachusetts. It provides support and training and serves as the Help Desk for legal aid staff across Massachusetts.

The staff of the Central Technology Project oversees computer hardware and software, telephone and internet service, video conferencing, and networks. Centralizing the legal aid community’s technology provides vital infrastructure to the legal aid network, and it improves efficiency and lowers costs.

This year, Central Technology staff moved quickly to ensure that, even as the state went into emergency lockdown because of COVID-19, legal aid staff were still able to aid clients in need. They rerouted telephone systems to reach remote workers, secured laptops and internet connections, and provided months of ongoing technology support to ensure that advocates could work safely from home. With video conferencing in high-demand, they also secured new products to ensure lawyers could talk to clients and appear in virtual court sessions.
Funding for Immigrants’ Rights

MLAC funds two grant programs that support Immigrants’ Rights work.

Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund
MLAC created the Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund in partnership with the City of Boston Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and a group of foundations in 2017. The fund supports legal aid and community organizations that represent and provide legal information to immigrants facing deportation who cannot afford a lawyer.

The Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund leverages national funding support as a member of the Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees’ nationwide Delivering on the Dream Initiative. The fund has awarded more than $2 million to a network of legal aid and community organizations—which builds the capacity of Eastern Massachusetts to protect vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and temporary status holders and respond to federal policy shifts.

Organizations that receive GBIDF funds:
- Brazilian Worker Center
- Catholic Social Services of Fall River
- Centro Presente
- Chelsea Collaborative
- Essex County Community Organization
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- Immigrant Family Services Institute
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
- MetroWest Legal Services
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services
- PAIR Project

Immigration Legal Assistance Fund
In 2019, with funding from an anonymous donor, MLAC created the Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund to respond to persistent unmet legal needs among vulnerable immigrant and refugee populations in the Commonwealth. MILAF provides funding to organizations that work to fill the gaps within services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. MILAF’s aim is to protect the rights of vulnerable immigrants so they can pursue a stable future. In FY 2020, the fund awarded more than $800,000 to twelve organizations, providing direct legal services, community education, and systemic advocacy that benefit large groups of immigrants.

Organizations that receive MILAF funds:
- 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
- Victim Rights Law Center

Aiding Victims of Crime

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 legal problems that cannot be solved through the criminal law system. For example, a victim of an assault may be unable to work, leading to financial distress including an eviction and debt collection problems. Or, a survivor of domestic violence may need legal help to get a divorce and child support. Jane Doe, Inc. and the National Consumer Law Center provide training and support. MLAC and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute also provide training, support and overall CLAVC project coordination.

Nine civil legal aid organizations provide direct legal services to victims of crime through the CLAVC 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
- Victim Rights Law Center

Promoting Diversity

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative spurs legal aid organizations to reflect the diversity of their clients, promote internal equity, and exemplify racial justice and fairness—through education and training, improved hiring practices, statewide events, and collaboration.

One way MLAC pursues this initiative is through the Statewide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, led by Tonysha Taylor, MLAC’s director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Council encourages transparency and communication between MLAC and the organizations it funds and promotes shared solutions to persistent inequities.

In FY 20, the DEI Initiative:
- Helped new grantee organizations launch or expand their DEI programs
- Launched MLAC’s COVID-19 Racial Justice Committee, which launched the COVID-19 Racial Justice Fund to support civil legal solutions to racial health disparities
- In response to the senseless deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, led workshops and training sessions on racial justice and diversity issues for staff at MLAC and the organizations it funds.

- Held a day-long, statewide conference, “Disrupting Cycles of Inequity,” which included experts on implicit bias and racial equity and advocates for immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.
We grieve for those put at risk by systemic inequality, and pledge to continue working with our local communities to dismantle structural racism and to fight for justice for all.

- COMMUNITY LEGAL AID

As an organization committed to promoting the civil and human rights of all persons with disabilities – and in respect of the undeniable intersections that exist between disability, race, and socioeconomic status in this country – we stand in solidarity with the Black community during these difficult times.

- DISABILITY LAW CENTER

We believe that all people have an inalienable right to justice and fairness.

- GREATER BOSTON LEGAL SERVICES

We pledge to turn the current anguish suffered by so many into a recommitment to our principal goal – equal justice for all under law and a fair opportunity for all to enjoy the blessings of liberty.

- NORTHEAST LEGAL AID

No one can be a defender of human rights or proponent of freedom while standing on the sidelines watching others fight for racial justice.

- PRISONERS’ LEGAL SERVICES

As allies of those seeking an end to racial injustice, we voice our support of peaceful protest and will continue working for access to justice for all.

- METROWEST LEGAL SERVICES

We believe that all people have an inalienable right to justice and fairness.

- MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

We are committed to standing with people from Black and communities of color and to condemn the racism and the killings that have horrified us. We commit to working to understand and address our own implicit bias, to address racism in our work – to listen, to hear, and to act.

- CENTER FOR PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

We are committed to helping MLAC staff and partner organizations re dedicate ourselves to racial justice, and rethink policies and practices as we fight both explicit and implicit bias and systemic racism.

- MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
 When Jenna was pregnant with her third child, she received startling news. The hospital where she was to deliver her baby said she owed $6,000, and her insurance company was refusing to pay it.

Jenna worked with her husband at a dry cleaners, but the unexpected medical bill was more than they could manage. A social worker at the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center suggested Jenna meet with an attorney at the center’s Medical Legal Partnership. “I didn’t know there were lawyers there,” Jenna said. Even more surprising was that their services were free.

Katie Condon Grace, a staff attorney with MetroWest Legal Services, assured Jenna that the debt wasn’t her fault and she could help her. “It just wasn’t fair. And I knew with the proper intervention, we might be able to get her the correct coverage and help eliminate the medical debt,” Grace said.

Jenna was thrilled. “Everything was solved,” she said. With the legal issue behind her, Jenna was able to focus on raising her three daughters and furthering her education.

LEGAL AID DELIVERS

Essential Services During the COVID-19 crisis

When the COVID-19 crisis hit Massachusetts, the impact on legal aid and the clients it serves was severe. Low-income people and other vulnerable populations quickly felt the impact of the faltering economy and skyrocketing unemployment and needed immediate assistance with housing, healthcare, food, and other public benefits.

MLAC provides the crucial infrastructure that connects the network of civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. This enabled the organizations MLAC funds to switch to remote work and provide essential, COVID-19-related legal help immediately. MLAC’s statewide information technology and telephone networks allowed advocates to switch seamlessly to remote work to meet the need for essential legal services.

PROVIDING IMMEDIATE AID

Legal aid organizations addressed a wide range of legal issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

• Advocates worked with the Department of Unemployment Assistance to help low-wage workers—especially those who did not have computer access and those with limited English proficiency—file online unemployment applications and appeal wrongful denials.

• Housing advocates aided tenants who were unable to pay rent and families seeking to fend off unlawful evictions or avoid foreclosure. Even after the eviction moratorium was instituted, advocates continued to help tenants who were still threatened with being turned out of their homes during the public health crisis and with other housing issues.

• Legal aid lawyers filed restraining orders for survivors of domestic violence who were sheltering at home with their abusers and uncertain where to turn while many courts were closed.

• Immigration courts remained open during the pandemic, and legal aid attorneys continued to represent vulnerable immigrants and refugees. They also advised immigrant families who were concerned with a lack of access to food banks, healthcare, and social services.

• Consumer protection advocates assisted people with pandemic-related bankruptcy filings, debt collection, price gouging, and unfair and deceptive practice and identity theft cases.

• Legal aid organizations also provided information to: families in need of emergency childcare or guidance on guardianship and visitation rights amidst social distancing; and parents of students with disabilities navigating individual education plans remotely, among others.

MLAC provides the crucial infrastructure that connects the network of civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

ADVOCATE RESOLVES MEDICAL DEBT FOR MOTHER OF THREE

When Jenna was pregnant with her third child, she received startling news. The hospital where she was to deliver her baby said she owed $6,000, and her insurance company was refusing to pay it.

Jenna worked with her husband at a dry cleaners, but the unexpected medical bill was more than they could manage. A social worker at the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center suggested Jenna meet with an attorney at the center’s Medical Legal Partnership.

“I didn’t know there were lawyers there,” Jenna said. Even more surprising was that their services were free.

Katie Condon Grace, a staff attorney with MetroWest Legal Services, assured Jenna that the debt wasn’t her fault and she could help her. “It just wasn’t fair. And I knew with the proper intervention, we might be able to get her the correct coverage and help eliminate the medical debt,” Grace said.

Jenna was thrilled. “Everything was solved,” she said. With the legal issue behind her, Jenna was able to focus on raising her three daughters and furthering her education.
**Award Winners**

Civil legal aid lawyers and staff across the Commonwealth received honors and recognition for their advocacy on behalf of low-income Massachusetts residents.

**Top Women of Law 2019**

In November, Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly recognized several civil legal aid attorneys as Top Women of Law: Naomi Meyer, Greater Boston Legal Services attorney; Naomi Mann, former Greater Boston Legal Services attorney; Peggy Ho, Greater Boston Legal Services board member; Anna Richardson, Veterans Legal Services co-executive director; and Jamie Sabino, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute attorney. The event celebrated “the achievements of exceptional women lawyers who are pioneers, educators, trailblazers and role models.”

The Women’s Bar Association selected Amalia Jorns of Northeast Legal Aid and Maggie Morgan of Greater Boston Legal Services as members of the sixth class of its Women’s Leadership Initiative. The initiative unites senior women attorneys and up and coming stars of the legal profession for leadership development and mentoring. This program helps change the practice of law by fostering the growth of women into leadership positions.

**Shriver Center Racial Justice Institute Fellows**

In April, the Shriver Center on Poverty Law chose 44 new fellows to participate in its 2020 Racial Justice Institute, a program that “equips and coordinates anti-poverty advocates to affirmatively advance racial equity.” Six Massachusetts legal aid staff members were selected:

- Daniel Bahls, Community Legal Aid
- Alyssa Golden, Community Legal Aid
- Nina Harrison, Community Legal Aid
- Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Community Legal Aid
- Mario Paredes, Prisoners’ Legal Services
- LaToya Whiteside, Prisoners’ Legal Services

Racial Justice Institute fellows receive seven months of training before joining a national network of the institute’s alumni who pursue racial equity through litigation, organizational alignment, and policy advocacy.

**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.

Nina Harrison, Racial Justice Fellow and Community Legal Aid attorney, helps formerly incarcerated residents of central and western Massachusetts resolve civil legal issues and reintegrate into society. From housing, to employment, to issues with their record, recently released individuals often face many challenges re-entering their communities. Legal advice is often necessary to help people understand their rights and navigate bureaucratic processes. Harrison’s work offers people who have paid their debt to society help, fairness, and a second chance.

“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.

Nina Harrison, Racial Justice Fellow and Community Legal Aid attorney, helps formerly incarcerated residents of central and western Massachusetts resolve civil legal issues and reintegrate into society. From housing, to employment, to issues with their record, recently released individuals often face many challenges re-entering their communities. Legal advice is often necessary to help people understand their rights and navigate bureaucratic processes. Harrison’s work offers people who have paid their debt to society help, fairness, and a second chance.

Nina’s work exemplifies the spirit of the Racial Justice Fellowship, which seeks to reduce obstacles to justice for the most marginalized people.

- LYNNE PARKER, MLAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roger Williams University School of Law 2020 Alumni Public Interest Champion

Roger Williams University School of Law named Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, managing attorney of Community Legal Aid’s Worcester and Fitchburg offices, its 2020 Alumni Public Interest Champion of Justice. A former Bart Gordon Fellow and AmeriCorps Supervisor at South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Nelson-Davies also worked as a medical-legal partnership staff attorney at Community Legal Aid before she became Managing Attorney.

Shriver Center Racial Justice Institute Fellows

In April, the Shriver Center on Poverty Law chose 44 new fellows to participate in its 2020 Racial Justice Institute, a program that “equips and coordinates anti-poverty advocates to affirmatively advance racial equity.” Six Massachusetts legal aid staff members were selected:

- Daniel Bahls, Community Legal Aid
- Alyssa Golden, Community Legal Aid
- Nina Harrison, Community Legal Aid
- Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Community Legal Aid
- Mario Paredes, Prisoners’ Legal Services
- LaToya Whiteside, Prisoners’ Legal Services

Racial Justice Institute fellows receive seven months of training before joining a national network of the institute’s alumni who pursue racial equity through litigation, organizational alignment, and policy advocacy.

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.
MLAC Team

MLAC STAFF

Lyenne 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

Carolyn Goodwin  
Director, Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission

Douglas Grenier  
Director, Civil Legal Aid & Justice Commission, Boston

Justice Commission

Director, Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission

Carolyn Goodwin

Director of Communications

Grace Coughlin

Bookkeeper

Catherine Brady

Director, Equal Justice Coalition

Laura Booth

Justice Commission

Director, Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission

Carolyn Goodwin

Welcome

The board of directors of the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation welcomed two new members: Jeffrey Catalano, partner at the Boston law firm Todd & Weld LLP, and April English, Chief of Organization Development & Diversity at the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General (“AGO”). Catalano and English were appointed to the MLAC board by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Catalano has served in numerous leadership positions at the Massachusetts Bar Association and as a pro bono attorney for Massachusetts Advocates for Children (an MLAC-funded organization), and currently he serves as a commissioner of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission. In addition to her record of public service at the AGO, English brings expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion to help advance MLAC’s leadership in promoting DEI in civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. April English has been with the Massachusetts Attorney General’s office since 2003 working in the consumer protection division and insurance and unemployment fraud division.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marjorie Benner Browne, Chair

Director of lateral partner recruiting, Ropes & Gray LLP, Boston

Mala M. Rafik, Vice Chair

Managing partner, Rosenfeld & Rafik, Boston

Timothy M. Linnehan, Treasurer

Coordinator of Alternative Dispute Resolution Services, Executive Office of the Trial Court, Boston

Jeffrey Catalano

Partner, Todd & Weld LLP, and Commissioner, Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission, Boston

April English

Chief of Organization Development & Diversity, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, Boston

Timothy Lee

Computer consultant, also serving on the boards of National Alliance on Mental Illness, MetroWest Chapter, Volunteer Lawyers Project, and Advocates, Framingham

Edward McIntyre

Sole practitioner, McIntyre Mediation, Clinton

Mary Jeanne Stone

Sole practitioner, Law Office of Mary Jeanne Stone, Fall River

Martha Rogers

Data Associate

Patricia Shaughnessy

Support and Training Specialist

Jacqueline Sullivan

Technology Support Analyst

Patricia Swansey

Program Director

Tonysha Taylor

Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

MLAC STAFF

Danielle Hines-Graham

Operations Manager

Tobey Johnson

Director of Information Technology

Freddy Matute

Fiscal Manager

Azim Mazonwawla

Chief Financial Officer

Evan Molinari

Communications Associate

Shamika Naidu

Grants Manager

Michael Raabe

Director of Data and Policy Analysis

Richard Vitali

Private attorney, Lynn

Geoffrey Wilson

Retired Presiding Justice of the Franklin County Probate and Family Court

Alma Woodberry

Community advocate, Brockton

Welcome

The board of directors of the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation welcomed two new members: Jeffrey Catalano, partner at the Boston law firm Todd & Weld LLP, and April English, Chief of Organization Development & Diversity at the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General (“AGO”). Catalano and English were appointed to the MLAC board by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Catalano has served in numerous leadership positions at the Massachusetts Bar Association and as a pro bono attorney for Massachusetts Advocates for Children (an MLAC-funded organization), and currently he serves as a commissioner of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission. In addition to her record of public service at the AGO, English brings expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion to help advance MLAC’s leadership in promoting DEI in civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. April English has been with the Massachusetts Attorney General’s office since 2003 working in the consumer protection division and insurance and unemployment fraud division.

CLIENT STORY

Client Story

Kenda never saw herself as a victim. But after years of an abusive marriage, her husband walked out of their family home on Christmas Day, leaving her and her four young children with no money and little hope.

When Kenda and her husband moved to Massachusetts, he had a job, and his family gave them money toward a down payment on a house. He was violent and struggled with substance abuse, but Kenda thought she could manage it, even as the situation deteriorated.

When he left, Kenda had no job and no income. She sought help from the South Shore Women’s Resource Center. They gave her diapers, food, and a referral to South Coastal Counties Legal Services.

Legal aid lawyers at SCCLS helped her obtain a restraining order and represented her in a years-long divorce dispute. A family court judge awarded Kenda sole legal custody of her children and half the proceeds from their only asset – the family house.

Her former parents-in-law sued her for that money, claiming they had loaned it to her. They also claimed she wasn’t eligible for representation by legal aid lawyers. The judge disagreed, allowing the SCCLS lawyers to represent her again, this time before a jury in district court. The jury ruled in Kenda’s favor. She used the settlement for a down payment on a home she purchased through an affordable housing lottery.

Those three years were a spider web of messiness. I could never have found my way through it without these amazing and competent attorneys,” said Kenda. “My children’s lives are completely changed because of the help we received from legal aid.”
Fiscal Year 2020

Grant Allocation

STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Consumer Law Center</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$206,420</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>$9,159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$215,579</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center for Public Representation</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$350,914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Project</td>
<td>$36,068</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Grant</td>
<td>$15,736</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$342,718</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Law Center of Massachusetts</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$246,864</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$103,427</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants' Rights Funding</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$300,291</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Law Center</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$412,839</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Project</td>
<td>$182,256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$98,736</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Grant</td>
<td>$18,871</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$722,702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massachusetts Advocates for Children</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$163,071</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$163,071</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massachusetts Law Reform Institute</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$2,477,037</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Project</td>
<td>$82,867</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites Project</td>
<td>$410,253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Access Fellowship</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$278,185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants' Rights Funding</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Grant</td>
<td>$148,013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$3,551,355</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Legal Aid</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$4,901,979</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects</td>
<td>$1,043,373</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$906,856</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants' Rights Funding Fellowship</td>
<td>$67,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmworkers</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$7,119,208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>De Novo Center for Justice and Healing</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$128,663</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects</td>
<td>$24,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$124,094</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants' Rights Funding</td>
<td>$57,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$334,756</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greater Boston Legal Services</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>$5,525,980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects</td>
<td>$1,316,213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Crime Act Funding</td>
<td>$1,851,613</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants' Rights Funding</td>
<td>$192,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Grant</td>
<td>$294,869</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$8,230,675</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL GRANTS | $32,642,186 |

**Guide to Terms and Abbreviations:**

- General Support funds are from the state appropriation and supplemented by IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts) funds. A portion of these funds are distributed through Special Projects.
- General Support funds are from the state appropriation and supplemented by IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts) funds. A portion of these funds are distributed through Special Projects.
- General Support funds are from the state appropriation and supplemented by IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts) funds. A portion of these funds are distributed through Special Projects.
- Disability Benefits Project - $1 million to eight organizations
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project - $2.4 million to seven organizations
- Medicaid Advocacy Project - $446,879 to three organizations
- Victims of Crime Act Funding is from a federal grant through the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.
- Immigrants’ Rights Funding is from private foundations and the City of Boston.

- MLAC administers two immigrant rights funds: The Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund (GBIDF) and the Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund (MILAF).
Fiscal Year 2020
Activities & Changes in Net Assets

REVENUE

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation $24,000,000
- Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance $4,202,773
- Massachusetts IOLTA Committee
  - Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts Program $6,619,294
  - Cy Pres Awards $356,793
  - Opt-out Bar Registration Fees $800,860
  - Pro Hac Vice Fees $187,010
  - Management Fees $91,267
- Interest and Other Income $187,010
- Net assets released from purpose restrictions $91,267
- Donated Legal Services $148,373

$38,790,993 TOTAL REVENUE

EXPENSES

- General Support: $28,367,938
  - General Support ($22,564,873)
  - Disability Benefits Project ($178,892)
  - Medicare Advocacy Project ($446,980)
  - Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project ($2,437,264)
  - Administrative Expense ($1,739,929)
- Restricted Projects: $5,807,773
  - MA Office for Victim Asst. Grant ($4,116,140)
  - Immigration Relief Funding Grant ($1,540,000)
  - Salaries ($18,810)
  - Payroll taxes & fringe benefits ($146,668)
  - Other support services ($1,849)
  - Travel ($121)
  - Office & other ($1,466)
  - Administrative Expense ($18,810)
- Other Program Grants, Technical & Program Support, and Administrative Expenses: $2,768,985.

$36,944,696 TOTAL EXPENSES

“What kind of a Commonwealth would we be if we did not protect the rights of those in need by providing them with adequate legal services?”

- CHIEF JUSTICE RALPH GANTS
MASSACHUSETTS SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

In memoriam 1954 - 2020
a champion of civil legal aid

MLAC directs all of its state-appropriated funds for general support, the Disability Benefits Project, the Medicare Advocacy Project, and the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. General support is supplemented by IOLTA funds.