

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

ARPA resources should fund Civil Legal Services to address COVID-19's impact on low-income residents and address racial, gender, health, education, and economic equity

➤ *Please co-sponsor Sen. DiDomenico's MLAC Amendment #257*

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation seeks Senate inclusion of \$18.2m in **American Rescue Plan Act** funding for four legal initiatives to remedy problems that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated for low-income people across the Commonwealth.

1. The **Housing and Eviction Representation** proposal would continue to use federal COVID relief funds to retain the lawyers and paralegals currently providing eviction legal representation to eligible tenants and owner-occupied 2-3 family homeowners. This program will end on December 31, 2021 without this crucial ARPA funding.

The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, the U.S. Attorney General, and the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development urged state and local government leaders to take action to avoid evictions, including using ARPA money to support eviction diversion strategies. They wrote **“Tenants are more likely to avoid eviction and remain stably housed when they have access to legal representation.”** (8/27/2021)
MLAC requests \$12.4 million to fund the project for one year.

COVID Eviction Legal Help Program - Demographic Data Oct. 2020 to June 2021

68%	47%	23%	14%	45%	41%	16%
women	people of color	Hispanic	limited English	children	disability	>59 yrs.

2. The **Medical Legal Partnership** proposal would allow legal and medical professionals to work together in health care settings to identify and address health-harming legal needs and promote health equity and improve overall health status and outcomes for low-income residents who have been disproportionately affected by COVID.
MLAC requests \$2.3 million to fund the project for one year.
3. The **High-Quality Education for All Students** proposal would eliminate barriers to fair and equitable education for all students, especially students of color, English language learners, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities, who are being disproportionately affected by COVID.
MLAC requests \$1.9 million to fund the project for one year.
4. The **Legal Services Family Preservation** proposal would work to reduce the number of children who enter the foster care system due to underlying poverty problems exacerbated by COVID such as inadequate housing, food insecurity, and family violence.
MLAC requests \$1.6 million to fund the project for one year.

Federal agencies support use of ARPA funding for civil legal services, including eviction representation, child welfare, and family stabilization efforts.

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