Dear Friends of Legal Aid,

While the public health risks of COVID-19 dissipated last year, other hardships exacerbated by the pandemic remained acute for people with low incomes. Thousands of Massachusetts residents faced ongoing challenges related to employment, domestic safety, shelter, and other basic needs.

Our state’s exemplary legal aid organizations responded by providing no-cost legal representation, guidance, and self-help resources to people in crisis, helping them secure safety, shelter, and economic stability. For example, legal aid attorneys helped people who were told they needed to repay unemployment benefits they had rightfully received during the pandemic. That monetary assistance had kept many households afloat; paying the money back was impossible. In FY22, legal aid advocates handled more than 2,000 unemployment related cases.

Recognizing the need for a robust network of legal aid organizations in Massachusetts to collectively rebuild after the pandemic, the state legislature allocated $35 million for MLAC in its FY22 budget. This was the largest sum MLAC had ever received.

MLAC distributed these state-appropriated funds to 16 legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth to collectively rebuild after the pandemic, the state legislature allocated $35 million for MLAC in its FY22 budget. This was the largest sum MLAC had ever received.

MLAC also received funding from a variety of other sources and distributed these to civil legal aid programs through our grant-funding process. In FY22, MLAC received more than $6.5 million from the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program and related funds and also took in more than $131 million in government and foundation grants.

In total, MLAC distributed $47,805,238 in FY22 to organizations that provide civil legal aid. The work of these organizations benefited people in 94% of cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

While this funding helped to improve the lives of many families and individuals, tens of thousands of our neighbors still face the daily struggles of poverty while also dealing with inflation, unaffordable housing costs, structural racism, and other challenges. When faced with a civil legal issue, they know paying an attorney is far out of reach—and that’s why civil legal aid organizations are so critical. As funding from MLAC has increased, legal aid organizations have expanded to serve more people through direct representation, innovative outreach initiatives, and systemic advocacy projects. A few years ago, 57% of people who met financial requirements and applied for help were denied representation; today, that number is 47%.

This report details the enormous impact civil legal aid has had in FY22 on strengthening individuals, families, and communities across our state. MLAC is proud to support this essential justice work, and we thank you for your interest and support in expanding access to civil legal aid.
The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest source of civil legal aid funding in the Commonwealth.

**BACKGROUND** MLAC was established by the Commonwealth in 1983 to ensure that people with low incomes with critical, non-criminal legal problems have access to legal information, advice, and representation.

**MISSION** Our mission is to provide leadership and support to improve civil legal services 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 Lawyer’s Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funds, and disperses it to qualified civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

**MLAC Revenue Sources (FY 2022)**

In FY22, MLAC received revenue from:

- A state appropriation of $35 million
- IOLTA program and related funds of more than $6.5 million
- Grants and other revenue totaling nearly $13.1 million

**$47,805,238**

Total of grants awarded by MLAC in FY 2022

In addition to funding, MLAC also supports grantee organizations with communications; data and research; diversity, equity, and inclusion; information technology; and program monitoring and evaluation.

**Civil legal aid organizations** provide advice and representation at no cost to people with low incomes 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 FY22, a family of four needed to have an annual income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level: $34,688.

Although the U.S. Constitution and the Massachusetts Constitution 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 uses state-appropriated funds to support two different types of civil legal aid organizations: regional and statewide.

**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** secures justice and maximizes opportunity for children and youth experiencing extreme poverty.
- **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 people and communities with low incomes.
- **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 U.S. veterans who are unhoused and/or have low incomes.

**REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Regional organizations help people from a particular geographic area resolve a variety 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.

After six years of work, Greater Boston Legal Services, La Colaborativa, and the Innes Resident Alliance tenant group are celebrating the creation of new affordable housing units at Innes Apartments in Chelsea. The deal creates almost 100 public housing units, which will be preserved for the next 99 years. The project will also create 40 middle-income units and 194 market rate units.

This public-private partnership redevelops the distressed public housing units at the Chelsea development into an inclusive mixed-income development with amenities that is close to public transportation. Work on the project began in 2016, and GBLS has been an integral part of the redevelopment process. As Executive Director of the Chelsea Housing Authority Albert Ewing stated: “This milestone is a transformative event for our residents, the Chelsea Housing Authority, the City of Chelsea and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).”
MLAC-funded programs provide a 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:
- Helping people obtain rental assistance during the pandemic
- Enforcing health, safety, and accessibility standards
- Advocating for access to affordable housing
- Defending clients from unlawful eviction and combating 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 through workshops
- Helping people secure the right to live and work in the U.S. legally
- Removing barriers to education for immigrants
- Protecting access to safety net programs

**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 also helps people facing:
- Improper denial of unemployment compensation
- Wage theft
- Employment discrimination
- Unsafe working conditions or unfair labor standards

During the pandemic, advocates found innovative ways to help people without computer access or with limited English proficiency file online unemployment applications and appeal wrongful denials.

**MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS**
In medical-legal partnerships (MLPs), civil legal aid attorneys work alongside medical professionals and help address the root cause of an illness. For more about MLPs, see page 11.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, access to patients in MLP clinics became challenging because of remote visits. Advocates used innovative strategies to connect with clients and address legal issues that caused health problems during the pandemic.

**CHILDREN & EDUCATION**
Civil legal aid lawyers help children experiencing issues related to:
- Access to equal education and equal opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, or disability
- Immigration, family separation, and asylum
- Guardianship, custody, domestic violence, and other family law issues
- Public benefits for families, including: SNAP, disability benefits, emergency assistance, and access to health care
- Trauma that affects children’s ability to succeed in school

**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 people have access to health care by:
- Identifying and correcting errors that jeopardize access to treatment
- Addressing the improper denial, termination, or reduction of public health benefits
- Appealing denial of coverage for life-sustaining medications or procedures
- Advocating for the rights of 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

**INCOME MAINTENANCE**
Civil legal aid lawyers work to ensure that people can access basic necessities and obtain the benefits they are qualified to receive by:
- Helping people gain access to government benefits, such as SNAP (food stamps), Social Security, SSI (Supplemental Security Income), SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Veterans Benefits
- Assisting people who have been wrongly denied benefits
- Aiding people who need help filing for, or appealing, a denial of unemployment benefits

**OLDER ADULTS**
Civil legal aid lawyers assist 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, discharge, conditions, and evictions
Cases Funded

42,955
Total cases handled by MLAC-funded organizations, including:

1,194
Cases handled by the Disability Benefits Project, securing federal SSI/SSDI benefits for elderly residents and those with long-term disabilities

1,536
Cases handled by the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, addressing physical safety, child custody and support, and health care coverage

213
Cases handled by the Medicare Advocacy Project, assisting elders and people with disabilities

Types of Cases

- 38% Housing
- 16% Individual Rights
- 15% Income Maintenance
- 11% Family
- 7% Education
- 5% Consumer
- 3% Employment
- 2% Miscellaneous
- 2% Health
- 1% Juvenile

Pro Bono and Reduced Fee Attorneys

2,278
pro bono attorneys collectively accepted ...

Full-Time Staff

362
Attorneys
95
Paralegals
These numbers represent full-time equivalents

Locations Served

94%
of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least one person with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

65%
of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least 10 people with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

Client Demographics

96,649
people benefited

AGE OF CLIENTS

Under 18
9%

18-59
69%

60 and Over
22%

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- 40% White non-Hispanic
- 27% Hispanic
- 21% Black non-Hispanic
- 6% Other
- 5% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 1% Native American

2,468
cases through legal aid organizations on behalf of Massachusetts residents with low incomes, contributing ...

42,341
hours of pro bono work worth $8.4 million
Strengthening Our Commonwealth Through Partnerships

Medical-legal partnerships (MLPs) place civil legal aid attorneys at hospitals, clinics, and community health centers to work alongside medical professionals and help address the root causes of poverty-related health problems that a doctor alone might be unable to fix.

Socio-economic factors, often referred to as the social determinants of health, have a tremendous impact on a person’s overall well-being. An American Journal of Preventive Medicine study from 2016 claims up to 80% of a person’s health outcomes are affected by factors such as economic stability, domestic safety, and personal networks. Together, medical providers and legal aid advocates can help people improve their health outcomes by addressing the root causes of their problems. Working in medical settings also makes MLP attorneys easily accessible to patients who need help with other civil legal issues. For example, if a child’s breathing problems can be traced to hazardous levels of mold in their apartment, a legal aid lawyer can help ensure the landlord complies with public health and safety laws so the child has a healthy place to live.

MLAC-funded civil legal aid organizations operate several MLPs across Massachusetts. A few notable examples include:

- **MetroWest Legal Services** partners with the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center in Framingham to provide an on-site attorney. In addition to giving direct legal advice and representation to patients, the on-site attorney trains health care providers to identify legal issues that may negatively affect the patient’s health.

- **Community Legal Aid (CLA)** manages MLPs at UMass Memorial Health Care, in Worcester; Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), in Northampton; and Commonwealth Care Alliance, in Springfield. The Commonwealth Care Alliance MLP launched in early 2022. In its first six months, the volume of referrals surpassed CLA’s expectations, with the vast majority of referrals relating to housing issues.

CLA has also coordinated with additional providers to launch new MLPs at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Worcester; Baystate Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield; and Community Healthlink, a branch of UMass Memorial.

**Northeast Legal Aid** has an MLP with the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center.

In September 2021, Veterans Legal Services (VLS) and the Veterans Administration (VA) Boston Healthcare System launched a new medical-legal partnership to provide free civil legal assistance to income-eligible veterans. VLS runs a monthly legal clinic on the campus of the Brockton VA, which provides both inpatient and outpatient services.

**Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)** was part of the first MLP, created at Boston Medical Center (then Boston City Hospital), and the collaboration remains strong to this day. For example, the GBLS Shelter Group has formed a working relationship with BMC’s Emergency Department to help recently arrived immigrant families who are being improperly denied emergency assistance or whose placements are improperly delayed. GBLS also has an MLP with Boston Children’s Hospital, which primarily facilitates housing case referrals from the social work team.

### FY22 Economic Benefits to Clients

- **Consumer** $2,526,590
- **Education** $2,290,250
- **Employment** $1,604,148
- **Family** $2,660,273
- **Health** $2,713,471
- **Housing** $36,135,981
- **Income Maintenance** $13,051,553
- **Individual Rights: Disability** $3,947,730
- **Individual Rights: Immigration** $35,872,504
- **Individual Rights: Other** $3,820,400
- **Miscellaneous** $636,837

**Total** $105,259,737

### FY22 Reimbursements and Savings to the Commonwealth

- **Homelessness prevention resulting in family and individual shelter costs saved** $19,865,210
- **Domestic violence prevention resulting in health care costs saved** $1,640,804
- **Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) funds reimbursed to Massachusetts** $141,946

**Total** $21,647,960
Websites Project

MLAC provides annual funding to the Websites Project, administered by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI). The Websites Project runs several free websites to help people find information about legal rights and where to find legal help.

MASS LEGAL HELP
MassLegalHelp.org provides practical information about civil legal issues. Its mission is to improve access to justice for disadvantaged people with low incomes. Written by advocates in the legal services community, the website connects, supports, and educates the general public. It provides information in seven languages: English, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

In FY22, Mass Legal Help had over 3 million users and nearly 5 million pageviews.

MASSLEGALSERVICES.ORG: THE ONLINE RESOURCE FOR MASSACHUSETTS POVERTY LAW ADVOCATES
At the heart of MassLegalServices.org (MLS) is a comprehensive poverty law library with over 30,000 pieces of content arranged in 24 practice areas. Content includes court decisions, hearing decisions, briefs, pleadings, training materials, agency materials and court materials. Many of these items are only available online at MLS.

In FY22, MLS added a new Racial Justice section and a library with COVID Eviction Legal Help Project advocacy materials. MLS also has a number of features to help legal services advocates communicate with and learn from each other, including dozens of topical email lists with thousands of participants.

TOP-VIEWED PAGE TOPICS ON MASS LEGAL HELP IN FY22:
- SNAP eligibility and maximum benefits
- Consumer Debt: What happens if I do not have the money to pay the debt or judgment?
- Domestic Violence: 209A Restraining Orders
- COVID-19 and emergency SNAP benefits
- What if the person who abused me files a protective order or criminal case against me?
- Paternity: What if I am married but want the baby’s biological father on the birth certificate?
- SNAP: Can I get benefits separately from other people I live with?
- Has the Department of Unemployment Assistance asked you to return money they paid you?
- SNAP: If I forget to use my EBT card, does my case close or will I lose benefits?

MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL RESOURCE FINDER
Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder (masslrf.org) is a website that helps Massachusetts residents find legal help and information. People can enter a short description of their legal problem into a search box or pick a topic from a list. The site also prompts them to enter their income, household size, zip code, and whether they are age 60 or older. The results page offers contact information for legal aid organizations, government agencies, pro bono projects, court programs and other nonprofits that might be able to help, as well as links to legal information. In FY22, there were over 44,300 completed searches for legal help on the site.

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ANSWERS ONLINE
Mass Legal Answers Online (MLAO) is a virtual legal helpline and the Massachusetts home of the nationwide American Bar Association Free Legal Answers program. Through MLAO, Massachusetts residents with low incomes can receive free advice on a range of civil legal issues from volunteer attorneys.

MLRI administers the site with help from the Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association. All communication between clients and attorneys on MLAO is private and secure.

In November 2021, MLAO marked its fifth anniversary and celebrated helping more than 6,100 people. By that time, the project had engaged 485 volunteer attorneys who collectively answered more than 6,600 questions.

In January 2022, the American Bar Association recognized ten individuals and three organizations as “ABA Free Legal Answers 2021 Pro Bono Leaders” for each answering over 50 questions on Mass Legal Answers Online in 2021.

“Because of the advice I received... I was able to get my security deposit back from my landlord. I never thought I would see that money again.”
Mass Legal Answers Online client

“My experience with Mass Legal Answers Online has opened my eyes to the needs of others and has given me the opportunity to make a real change in someone else’s life.”
Mass Legal Answers Online volunteer attorney
Special Projects

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

**GREATER BOSTON IMMIGRANT DEFENSE FUND**
The Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund was created in 2017 through a partnership between MLAC, the City of Boston Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and a group of foundations. 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 $3 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
- Essex County Community Organization
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- Immigrant Family Services Institute
- La Colaborativa
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
- MetroWest Legal Services
- Northeast Legal Aid
- PAIR Project
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services

**MASSACHUSETTS IMMIGRATION LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND**
In 2019, with funding from an anonymous donor, MLAC created the Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund (MILAF) 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 in 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. Since its inception, the fund has awarded more than $3 million. In FY22, it awarded $675,000 to 11 organizations that provided direct legal services, community education, and systemic advocacy to large groups of immigrants.

**Organizations that receive MILAF funds:**
- Community Legal Aid
- Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts
- De Novo Center for Justice and Healing
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- Health Law Advocates
- Justice at Work
- Northeast Legal Aid
- PAIR Project
- Prisoners’ Legal Services
- Rian Immigrant Center
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services

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

In 2022, three philanthropic partners provided funding for MLAC to create a program to assist Afghan refugees in filing and completing their legal status applications and resolutions in the Greater Boston area. Additional support was received from two resettlement agencies to fund five dedicated attorneys for this project.

**Organizations that received Afghan Refugee Project funds:**
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- MetroWest Legal Services
- PAIR Project

**COVID EVICTION LEGAL HELP PROJECT**

The COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP) was part of the Baker-Polito Administration’s Eviction Diversion Initiative, preserving housing stability for tenants and owner-occupants of two- and three-family homes who faced financial challenges caused by the pandemic. CELHP expanded the capacity of existing legal aid organizations to provide essential help to income-eligible tenants facing eviction due to COVID-19 and income-eligible owner-occupants of two- and three-family homes. CELHP’s impact has preserved housing statewide. During the term of the project, CELHP handled 4,698 cases across 331 cities and towns. Of these total cases, 4,600 were on behalf of tenants and 98 were on behalf of owner-occupant landlords. CELHP aided an estimated 11,745 people, of which at least 4,000 were children.

These positive results were made possible by the Baker-Polito Administration’s investment, coordinated efforts by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and CELHP’s partners. MLAC oversaw the delivery of services through contracts with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, the Volunteer Lawyers Project, and six regional legal aid organizations across the state: Community Legal Aid, De Novo Center for Justice and Healing, Greater Boston Legal Services, MetroWest Legal Services, Northeast Legal Aid, and South Coastal Counties Legal Services.

In addition to preserving housing security and the overall well-being of thousands of people, CELHP strengthened collaborations and developed important infrastructure within the legal aid community that will extend beyond the project’s lifetime.

**AIDING VICTIMS OF CRIME**

The Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime (CLAVC) initiative helps victims of crime throughout Massachusetts with their related civil legal problems—including family law, housing, immigration, disability rights, child welfare, education, consumer issues, 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 such as eviction or debt collection problems. Or, a survivor of domestic violence may need legal help to get a divorce and child support. The CLAVC initiative is supported by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) through a Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, and the U.S. Department of Justice. MOVA advocates for and assists victims of crime through survivor-informed policy development, fund administration, training, and individual assistance programs. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation provide training, support, and overall project coordination.

**Nine CLAVC-funded civil legal aid organizations provide direct legal services to victims of crime:**
- Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts
- Community Legal Aid
- De Novo Center for Justice and Healing
- Disability Law Center
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- MetroWest Legal Services
- Northeast Legal Aid
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services
- Victim Rights Law Center

**Anna’s Story**

“Anna” (name changed for privacy) came to the United States from Poland after meeting her fiancé online. They were married almost immediately after her arrival, and she quickly realized he was controlling, threatening, and abusive. For years, Anna was not allowed to leave their rural home without him.

Like many survivors, Anna suffered through the abuse for several years. It was not until her husband began turning his abusive behaviors toward their two children that she took action to leave the marriage. With representation from Community Legal Aid Staff Attorney Julie Dick, Anna obtained a restraining order, accessed emergency housing, impounded her address, and began moving forward with a divorce.

A year and a half of contentious litigation ensued, which included multiple hearings on motions for temporary orders and contempt. All of these events were complicated by difficulty accessing court interpreters for Anna.

Thanks to Attorney Dick’s preparation and support, Anna prevailed. The Probate and Family Court issued a judgment granting Anna sole legal and physical custody of their children, requiring safe boundaries around any parenting time that may happen in the future, and granting the autonomy to vacation with her children freely. The Court also granted a fair child support order and an equitable distribution of marital tax debt.

After years of being told by her abuser that she would not be believed over an American and could not count on the courts to help her, Anna and her children are now safe.
“Until we’ve conquered the coronavirus, we must continue to deal with its impacts on our society—not just medically, but legally, as well,” Chief Justice Budd said. “Just as we strive to provide necessary medical assistance to all who are affected by COVID, so we should strive to provide necessary legal assistance to all who are affected by COVID.”

Assistant Speaker Clark said that the pandemic “has exponentially increased the difficulties and traumas facing low-income Americans.”

“Every day, we rely on legal aid attorneys to take on cases to help protect residents in our communities—representing workers who didn’t get paid what they were owed, preventing families from being foreclosed upon or evicted, helping people navigate the unemployment claims process, working with survivors of domestic violence and that’s just the beginning,” said then Attorney General Healey (now Governor Healey), who has spoken in support of civil legal aid funding for many years.

The annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid, held as Talk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid, held the legal aid organizations described how legal aid lawyers fought to keep them safely housed and financially secure during the pandemic.

Carol, who had been permanently disqualified from receiving SNAP benefits under the federal “three strikes rule,” said her troubles were compounded by the loss of her job during the pandemic. A legal aid lawyer with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute successfully argued that the violations barring her from SNAP benefits were invalid and helped get her benefits reinstated in time for Thanksgiving.

“People need to know that there’s help out there,” Assistant Speaker Clark said that the pandemic’s disproportional impact on people with low incomes has intensified the need for civil legal services and the need for an additional $6 million in FY23 funding for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, up from $3.5 million in FY22.
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation strengthens legal aid in the Commonwealth by providing support in several key areas.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**
MLAC’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team improves civil legal aid services by building cultural competence, addressing diversity-related issues, and promoting equity within MLAC and the civil legal aid organizations it funds. Through education and training, improved hiring practices, statewide events, and collaboration, this initiative spurs legal aid organizations to reflect the diversity of their clients and exemplify our shared values of justice and fairness. The Statewide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council is led by MLAC’s Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and consists of staff representatives from legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. It encourages transparency and communication between MLAC and the organizations it funds and promotes shared solutions to persistent inequities.

**CENTRAL TECHNOLOGY**
The Central Technology team seeks to standardize technology for MLAC-funded legal aid organizations in Massachusetts. It provides Help Desk services, user support, and training to staff within these organizations. The staff of the Central Technology team oversees computer hardware and software, telephone and internet service, video conferencing, and networks.

**DATA AND ANALYSIS**
MLAC’s Data and Analysis team collects and analyzes a wide range of information about legal aid organizations funded by MLAC as well as the clients they serve. With that data, the team reports on: 1) the legal aid workforce (e.g., workforce diversity, areas of practice, language ability, and experience) and 2) the impact the workforce is having on behalf of people with low incomes (e.g., improved safety, health, income, housing, and more). The team then recommends new goals and strategies for addressing current and emerging legal needs.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**
MLAC conducts grantee evaluations using a peer review model that engages attorneys and other professionals skilled in organizational development and legal aid service delivery. Performance standards are drawn from the American Bar Association’s Standards for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services and cover six areas of focus: strategic planning and collaborative priority setting; development and utilization of resources; client access; quality assurance; management, administration, and use of technology; and governance.

**COMMUNICATIONS**
MLAC’s Communications team develops content and campaigns that promote awareness of civil legal aid and the work of MLAC grantees through client storytelling and data. Additionally, it supports efforts to increase communications and media outreach capacity within legal services on a statewide basis by convening regular meetings with legal aid organization communications and development staff and facilitating information exchange through a quarterly email newsletter.
Fellowships

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

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 Bart Gordon Fellows are funded each year for a one-year term, with an option to renew for a second year.

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.

Tanya Mamootil joined Community Legal Aid (CLA) as a Bart Gordon Fellow in August of 2021, shortly after graduating from Michigan State University College of Law. During her fellowship, she worked collaboratively with clients, other organizations, and communities throughout Western Massachusetts to provide legal aid services to tenants seeking access to fair and affordable housing. She also addressed discriminatory practices tenants faced in their attempts to rent units and protect their homes. As a student at Michigan State University College of Law, Tanya worked in the Housing Law Clinic, where she helped residents avoid eviction and resolved landlord-tenant disputes. Motivated in part by early childhood trips to her ancestral homeland in India, where she saw poverty and homelessness on a global scale, Tanya is dedicating her career to combatting the devastating effects of inequality. “I want to do impactful work and to serve underprivileged communities,” she says. Now a Staff Attorney at CLA, Tanya embodies this truth daily as a hardworking advocate for those in need.

Ada Lin is a Bart Gordon Fellow at Prisoners’ Legal Services (PLS). Since July of 2021, Ada has spent her time tirelessly fighting for medical parole for those who are eligible. She also ensures clients with disabilities have access to reasonable accommodation. Ada’s fearless approach to her work was honed through years of advocating for and serving vulnerable populations. Before attending Duke Law School, Ada was a paralegal for the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. There she helped formerly incarcerated people with employment discrimination cases in the metro D.C. area. After graduation, Ada started her fellowship at PLS, working with the Medical Parole Project and Healthcare and Disability Project. Ada is excited about the shift she has witnessed towards more community-led approaches to civil legal aid. “[Civil legal aid] work is better, more efficient, and more kind when it is led by those directly impacted,” she says. With pride, Ada looks forward to continuing her work in civil legal aid and developing as an inclusive, empathetic, and socially conscious advocate.

Awards

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

MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARDS

In 2022, three legal aid attorneys were honored by the Massachusetts Bar Association. Sarah Levy, Senior Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, and Stephen Matthews, Advocacy Director at MetroWest Legal Services, each received a Legal Services Award, and Hannah Tanabe, Senior Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, received the Rising Star Award.

SHRIVER CENTER RACIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE FELLOWS

In April 2022, the Shriver Center on Poverty Law selected 43 Fellows for its ninth annual Racial Justice Institute — and five were from Greater Boston Legal Services: Majda Abbas, Rita Cheresnowsky, De’Von Douglass, Lauren Honigman, and Debora Hyemin Han. The Racial Justice Institute is a seven-month leadership program designed to equip, train, and coordinate anti-poverty advocates to affirmatively advance racial equity.
Hillary Dunn Stanisz of the Disability Law Center was named by President Biden to the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Danielle Johnson, Housing Law Unit Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, was one of six recipients of the Women’s Bar Association 2021 Emerging Women Leaders in the Law Award. The award is presented to women who have excelled in the legal field while guiding other women to achieve success and support their communities through volunteerism and social justice.

Rachel Biscardi, Supervisory Attorney for Family Law at Northeast Legal Aid, was named a Top Family Lawyer by Boston Magazine.

Former MLAC Executive Director Lonnie Powers won the Commitment to Justice Award from the University of Arkansas School of Law, his alma mater.

Taramattie Doucette, Greater Boston Legal Services Senior Attorney in the Elder, Health and Disability Unit, was honored in November 2021 as one of Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly’s Top Women of Law. Tara is the co-founder, with attorney Jane G. Smith, and director of Greater Boston Legal Services’ Children’s Disability Project and was lead counsel on a class action lawsuit that required the MBTA to invest in improving public transportation access and services for people with disabilities.

CIVIL LEGAL AID FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME INITIATIVE RECEIVES INNOVATION AWARD

The Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime (CLAVC) initiative received the 2022 Innovation Award from the Victim and Witness Assistance Board and the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance. MLAC Executive Director Lynne Parker accepted the award along with Jamie Sabino of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, who is the co-managing attorney of CLAVC, and Catherine Kay of Community Legal Aid, who is the CLAVC senior supervising attorney.

“Working in legal services agencies across the state, CLAVC lawyers provide critical assistance to victims of crime who encounter civil legal needs as a result of their victimization. CLAVC generalists and specialists draw on the expertise of other legal service attorneys, pro bono partners, and community organizations to meet clients where they are and treat them as holistically as possible. It has been an honor and a delight to manage CLAVC and work with both senior and new lawyers in this ‘virtual law office.’”

Jamie Sabino, Deputy Director of Advocacy at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and Managing Attorney of CLAVC

MLAC Board and Staff

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Managing Partner,
Rosenfeld & Rafik, Boston

Richard Vitali, Vice Chair
Vitali Law Office, Lynn

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

Jeffrey Catalano
Partner, Keches Law Group

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

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Solo practitioner, McIntyre Mediation, Clinton

Carol Starkey
Partner, Conn Kavanaugh, Boston

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

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

Alma Woodberry
Community advocate, Brockton

FY22 Staff

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Executive Director

Tenzin Bayul
Executive Support and Organizational Development Manager

Laura Booth
Director, Equal Justice Coalition

Grace Coughlin
Legislative Campaign Associate

Michelle Deakin
Director of Communications

Danielle Hines-Graham
Operations Manager

Marlena Idrrobo
Communications Associate

Carolyn Goodwin
Director, Access to Justice Commission

Tobey Johnson
Director of Information Technology

Diane Lahey
Grant Administrator

Freddy Matute
Fiscal Manager

Azim Mazagonwalla
Chief Financial Officer

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Director of Data and Policy Analysis

Martha Rogers
Data Associate

Patricia Shaughnessy
Support and Training Specialist

Jacqueline Sullivan
Technology Support Analyst

Patricia Swansey
Director of Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Tonysha Taylor
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
MLAC Fiscal Year 2022 Grants: $47,805,238

### STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

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### REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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### GUIDE TO TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- **General Support** funds are from the state appropriation.
- **Special Projects**
  - Disability Benefits Project—$1,178,888 to eight organizations
  - Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project—$2,437,260 to seven organizations
  - Medicare Advocacy Project—$446,980 to three organizations
  - Victims of Crime Act funding is from a federal grant through the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.
- **Immigrant and Refugee Rights** funding is from private foundations, the City of Boston, and refugee resettlement organizations. MLAC administers two immigrant rights funds: The Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund (GBIDF) and the Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund (MILAF).
- **COVID Eviction Legal Help Project** funding is from a grant through the Department of Housing and Community Development.
Activities & Changes in Net Assets

FY22 RECEIPTS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation $35,000,000
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program $4,632,963
Opt-Out Bar Registration Fees $878,104
Cy Pres Awards $637,208
Pro Hac Vice Fees $231,460
Management Fees $138,925
COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP) Grant $6,210,000
Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA) Grant $4,327,265
Interest and Other Income $53,917
Donated Services $29,810
Forgiveness of Note Payable, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) $700,416
Grants with Donor Restrictions $2,556,505
TOTAL RECEIPTS $55,397,573

FY22 EXPENDITURES

Program Services General and Administrative Total
Personnel and Related Costs
Salaries $1,029,789 $672,945 $1,702,734
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits $297,115 $241,696 $538,811
Total Personnel and Related Costs $1,326,904 $914,641 $2,241,545
Grants and Contracts Awarded
Regional and Statewide Organizations $30,838,468 — $30,838,468
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project $2,437,260 — $2,437,260
Disability Benefits Project $1,178,888 — $1,178,888
Medicare Advocacy Project $446,980 — $446,980
Forgivable Loan Disbursements $98,404 — $98,404
Other Grants
COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP) $5,942,860 — $5,942,860
Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA) $4,205,138 — $4,205,138
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding $1,233,460 — $1,233,460
Websites Project $388,041 — $388,041
Central Technology $430,738 — $430,738
Other $77,796 — $77,796
Fellowships $527,205 — $527,205
Total Grants and Contracts Awarded $47,805,238 — $47,805,238
Other
Professional Services $1,092,061 $432,047 $1,524,108
Occupancy $153,542 $339,984 $493,526
Other Support Services $420,164 $28,766 $448,930
Office and Other $11,081 $35,831 $46,912
Depreciation $1,294 $16,389 $17,683
Travel $2,871 — $2,871
Total Other $1,679,719 $854,311 $2,534,030
TOTAL EXPENSES $50,811,861 $1,768,952 $52,580,813

NET ASSETS

End of Year: June 30, 2022
$9,366,774

“Massachusetts’s civil legal aid organizations are a critical component of our state’s ability to deliver on its promise of justice for all. The dedicated attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff at these organizations continuously raise the bar as they innovate, respond to new and growing needs, and remove barriers to opportunity for people in crisis—bringing hope, strength, and stability to communities across the Commonwealth.”

Lynne Parker, Executive Director