

# Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

## MLAC requests \$15.5 million for civil legal aid in FY14

The appropriation (0321-1600) funds general support grants for civil legal aid programs and three special projects: battered women's rights, disability benefits and Medicare advocacy.

### The legal aid fiscal crisis

Income from the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, historically civil legal aid's largest funding source, has suffered a devastating **78% decline since 2008**, and is expected to decrease further in FY14.\* As a result, MLAC has cut grants to the legal aid programs it funds by **54%**, leading to layoffs and drastic cuts in services.

**To help reduce the impact of the lost IOLTA revenue, MLAC requests a 28% increase over its FY13 appropriation of \$12 million. The money will avoid further layoffs and service cuts that would force programs to turn away even more residents who need legal help.**

### More clients

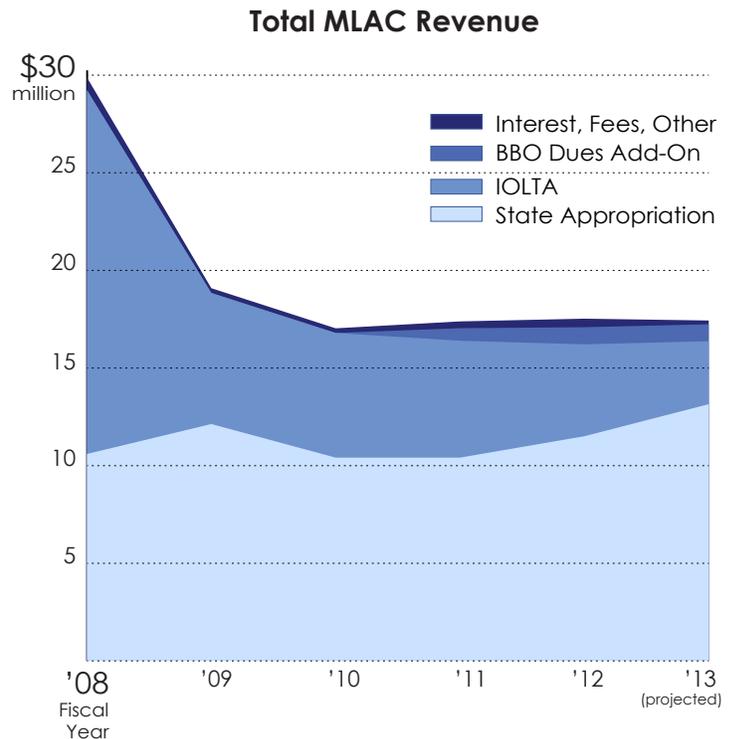
According to the Census Bureau, the number of individuals and families eligible for civil legal aid has **increased 13%**, or 112,000 in the past two years. Eligibility for most legal aid programs is 125% of the federal poverty level (just \$554 per week for a family of four).

### Fewer staff

MLAC-funded local legal aid programs have lost 77 of 212 attorney positions since FY08. Some programs have cut salaries, closed offices and laid off nearly half of their attorneys. As a result, programs are now forced to turn away **at least half** of the low-income families and individuals who come to them with critical problems such as foreclosure, missing Social Security payments and domestic violence.

### SPOTLIGHT: Boosting the economy

→ The work of MLAC-funded programs substantially helps the Massachusetts economy. New revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth from civil legal aid in FY12 were estimated at **\$48 million**, \$27 million in the form of new federal revenues.



FY13 projection does not include a one-time, two-year \$6 million grant from the Massachusetts Attorney General to assist homeowners facing foreclosure who may not be income-eligible for legal aid.

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation was established by the state legislature 30 years ago to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems have access to legal information, advice and representation. For more information visit [www.mlac.org](http://www.mlac.org).

\* The IOLTA program requires attorneys to deposit short-term or modest client funds in special accounts. Interest from these accounts funds access to justice initiatives and civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts. For more information visit [www.maiolta.org](http://www.maiolta.org).

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