

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Line item 0321-1600

FY10 Appropriation	FY11 Appropriation	FY12 Appropriation	FY13 Appropriation	FY14 Request
\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$10,500,000	\$12,000,000	\$15,500,000

The appropriation funds general support grants for civil legal aid programs as well as three special projects: the **Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project**, the **Disability Benefits Project** and the **Medicare Advocacy Project**.

The legal aid funding 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**.* As a result, MLAC has cut grants to the legal aid programs it funds by **54%** since FY08.

MLAC requests an increase of \$3.5 million for FY14 to protect the very foundation of civil legal aid, address critical legal needs of low-income residents and continue to leverage federal funds in Massachusetts.

SPOTLIGHT:

Boosting the economy

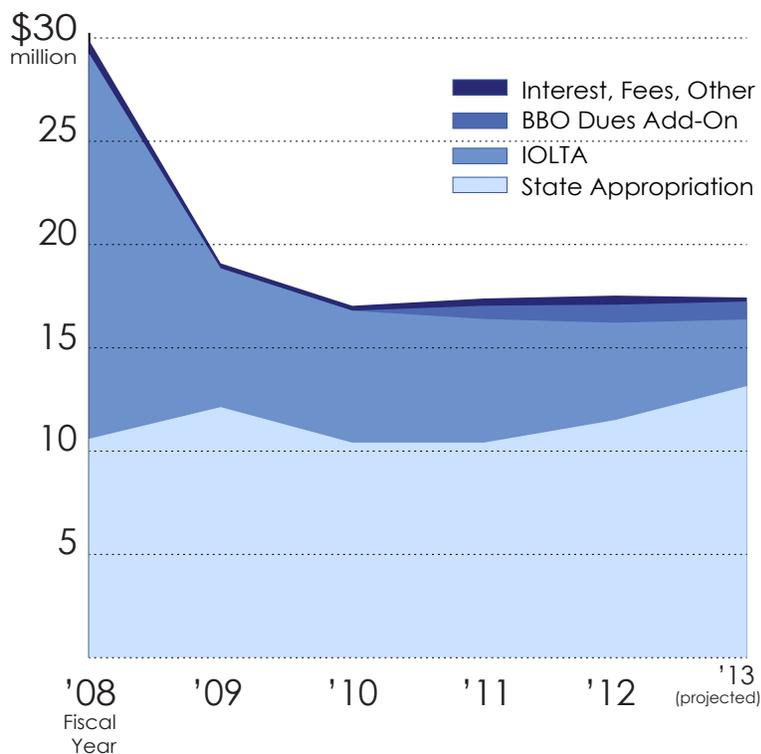
→The work of MLAC-funded programs substantially helps the Massachusetts economy. New revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth from civil legal aid in FY12 were estimated at **\$48 million**, \$27 million in the form of new federal revenues.

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 unemployment, foreclosure, missing Social Security payments and domestic violence.

* 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.

Total MLAC Revenue



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.

More clients

According to the Census Bureau, the number of individuals and families eligible for civil legal aid continues to grow — an **increase of 13%**, or 112,000 in the past two years. Eligibility for most legal aid programs is 125% of the federal poverty level (\$537 per week for a family of four).

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.

Contacts:

Lonnie Powers, MLAC: 617-367-8544 | lpowers@mlac.org
Elaine O'Reilly & Mary Ann Walsh, Governmental Strategies: 617-447-5174 | 617-447-3711
eoreilly@governmentalstrategies.com | mawalsh@governmentalstrategies.com