

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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New Report Shows Civil Legal Aid Generates Millions in New Revenue, Cost Savings for Mass.

BOSTON, January 17, 2012 – Massachusetts civil aid programs generated an estimated \$53.2 million in new revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth last year, according to a new report issued today by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC).

Of this amount, \$27.7 million was in the form of new federal revenue, the report found. The state appropriation for MLAC in FY11 was \$9.5 million.

“This report provides proof that civil legal aid is a sound investment of the Commonwealth’s resources, especially during these difficult economic times,” said Lonnie Powers, executive director of MLAC, the largest funding source for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. “In addition to being a last-resort for low-income people with critical legal problems, legal aid provides a significant economic boost that has a long-lasting, positive impact on society as a whole.”

In addition to new federal revenue, MLAC estimates the work of its grantees saved the Commonwealth millions in costly social services by keeping clients out of the emergency shelter system, courts and emergency rooms. The data was reported to MLAC by the 16 legal aid programs it funds in the Commonwealth.

Powers said the FY11 report, echoing findings of previous years’ reports, supports MLAC’s position that after several years of level funding from the state, it is time for a modest increase for civil legal aid in FY13. “We understand the budget crunch continues, but the data show that legal aid programs are worth an increased investment by the Commonwealth,” Powers said.

Among the key findings were:

- New federal revenue brought to the Commonwealth included \$8.7 million in retroactive payments to first-year SSI beneficiaries, more than \$500,000 in Medicare appeals funding and \$9.7 million in additional federal unemployment benefits.
- Approximately \$10.4 million in additional benefits were secured for low-income residents through unemployment insurance, housing stabilization, utility arrearage forgiveness and child support orders
- Legal aid programs generated savings of approximately \$15.1 million for the Commonwealth in preventing homelessness and assistance to domestic violence victims.

The full report is available at <http://www.mlac.org/research.html>.

About MLAC

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation was established by the state legislature in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation. It is the largest funding source for civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts. For more information, visit <http://www.mlac.org>.