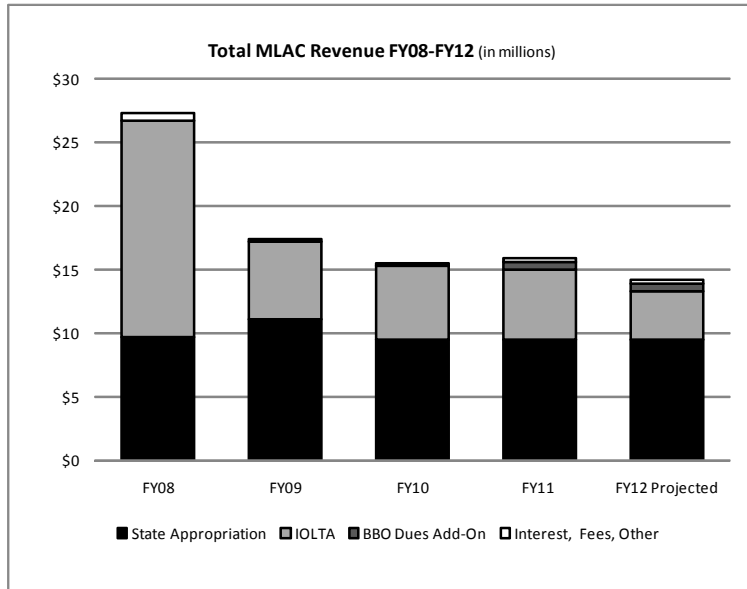


Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Line item 0321-1600

FY09 Appropriation	FY10 Appropriation	FY11 Appropriation	FY12 Appropriation	FY13 Request	FY13 Governor
\$11,070,424	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$9,500,000	\$14,500,000	\$12,000,000

The appropriation funds general support grants for 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**.



Legal aid is in crisis.

Plummeting interest rates combined with the housing market crash have resulted in a dramatic **78% decline** in MLAC's income from the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program. As a result, MLAC has cut grants to the legal aid programs it funds by **56%** since FY08. To help restore service levels, **MLAC requests an increase of \$5 million for FY13.**

The work of MLAC-funded legal aid programs substantially boosts the Commonwealth's economy. New revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth from civil legal aid in FY11 were estimated at **\$53.2 million**, \$27.7 million in the form of new federal revenues. The full report can be found at <http://www.mlac.org/research.html>.

- There has been a **decrease of 31%** in the number of attorneys at MLAC-funded civil legal aid programs, with some programs losing up to 40% of attorneys. As a result, programs have been forced to turn away low-income Massachusetts residents with critical problems such as unemployment appeals and evictions due to foreclosure. Programs also have instituted furloughs and reduced office hours, further compromising their ability to serve clients, and cut the salaries and benefits of remaining staff.
- According to the Census Bureau, the number of individuals and families eligible for civil legal aid continues to grow — an **increase of 11%**, or 94,000, from 2009 to 2010 alone. Eligibility for most legal aid programs is 125% of the federal poverty level (\$554 per week for a family of four).

* The Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (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.

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) was established by the state legislature 29 years ago to ensure that low-income people with critical, non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation. For more information visit <http://www.mlac.org>.

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