

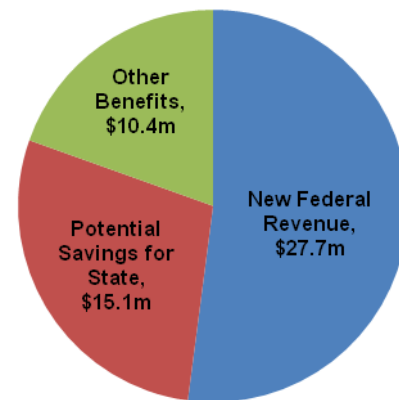
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Economic Benefits of Civil Legal Aid: How Legal Aid Boosted the Commonwealth's Economy in FY11

The work of legal aid programs funded by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) brings in millions of federal dollars each year, wins millions more in financial support for low-income Massachusetts residents and saves the state the expense of costly social services.

In FY11, new revenue for civil legal aid clients and cost savings to the Commonwealth won by legal aid totaled an estimated **\$53.2 million**. Of this amount, **\$27.7 million was in the form of new federal revenue**. The state appropriation for MLAC in FY11 was only \$9.5 million.

Total = \$53.2 million



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

New Federal Revenue Brought into the Commonwealth: **\$27.7 million**

- **SNAP (Food Stamps): \$8.6 million**
Policy changes spearheaded by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute were responsible for bringing an additional \$8,595,530 in federal SNAP benefits to the Commonwealth.
- **SSI/SSDI: \$8.7 million**
MLAC's Disability Benefits Project*, with state funding of only \$1.2 million, yielded \$8,089,777 in federal retroactive payments and first-year benefits to clients, as well as \$619,515 in direct federal reimbursements to the Commonwealth. The average recipient receives benefits for 9.7 years.
- **Medicare Appeals: \$558,527**
Clients of MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project** won \$558,527 in Medicare coverage of health care costs.

**DBP services are provided by the following programs: Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau, Center for Public Representation, Community Legal Aid, Community Legal Services and Counseling Center, Disability Law Center, Greater Boston Legal Services, MetroWest Legal Services, Neighborhood Legal Services and South Coastal Counties Legal Services.*

***MAP services are provided by Community Legal Aid, Greater Boston Legal Services and South Coastal Counties Legal Services.*

- **Federal Taxes: \$75,000**
Greater Boston Legal Services provided assistance with federal tax appeals, bringing in \$75,000 to low-income clients.
- **Federal Unemployment Benefits: \$9.7 million**
Successful representation by MLAC-funded programs in unemployment compensation appeals brought \$9,667,488 in federal extended unemployment benefits to low-income Massachusetts workers.

Other Benefits Won for Low-Income Residents: **\$10.4 million**

- **Unemployment Insurance: \$3.4 million**
Low-income workers represented by MLAC-funded programs won \$3,389,295 in unemployment benefit appeals.
- **Housing Stabilization: \$415,992**
Low-income households received \$415,992 in rent relief and damages as a result of representation by just two MLAC-funded programs.
- **Low-Income Utility Arrearage Forgiveness: \$3.2 million**
The Massachusetts utility Arrearage Management Programs, for which the MLAC-funded National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) drafted the original legislation, reduced utility bills for low-income residents by approximately \$17.6 million in 2011, an increase of \$3.2 million from the previous year. NCLC has been active in promoting the program.
- **Child Support Orders: \$3.3 million**
MLAC-funded programs won 429 child support orders in, with an average payment level of \$150 per week. This amounts to income of approximately \$3,346,200 per year for low-income custodial parents and their children. Child support orders also reduce dependence on TANF.

Potential Savings for the Commonwealth: **\$15.1 million**

- **Preventing Homelessness: \$11.3 million**
MLAC estimates an additional cost savings to the Commonwealth of \$11,251,027 from legal assistance that kept low-income families in their homes and out of the costly emergency shelter system.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention: \$3.9 million**
MLAC estimates that its Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project* saved the Commonwealth \$3,884,400 in medical and court costs by preventing further assaults on clients.

**BWLAP services are provided by Community Legal Aid, Community Legal Services and Counseling Center, Greater Boston Legal Services, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Merrimack Valley – North Shore Legal Services, MetroWest Legal Services and South Coastal Counties Legal Services.*