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Lopez, Donna

From: Filler, Deborah [dfiller@gbls.org]
Sent: Monday, May 05, 2014 10:42 AM
To: Alpert, Neal
Cc: Sherri Tucker; Hegel, Susan; Lopez, Donna
Subject: Copies of several letters and emails that have been submitted in support of Policy Order Resolution #0-7; PLEASE PROVIDE TO ALL CITY COUNCILORS
Attachments: PDF_S042.PDF

Hi Neal. I am one of the lawyers at CASLS, and I'll be coming to tonight's City Council meeting to testify on behalf of the proposed resolution in support of increased funding for our agency (for which we are extremely grateful). We know that several Cambridge service provider agencies and tenant representatives have submitted letters and/or emails to support Policy Order Resolution #0-7, though we're not sure that all have actually been received due to technological glitches. I've scanned and attached copies of the letters and emails which we are aware of to date. There may also have been a letter submitted by staff of Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, though I do not have a copy of that letter. Can you please ensure that the City Councilors receive copies of these emails and letters of support in advance of tonight's meeting? Thank you very much.

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GREATER BOSTON
LEGAL SERVICES
...and justice for all

Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services Office

Brief Description of CASLS' Legal Work
For Cambridge Residents
April 17, 2014

Prior to 1996, Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) was a separate non-profit agency providing free, civil legal services to low income, elderly, and disabled residents of Cambridge (plus 5 other neighboring localities). In 1996, due to federal regulatory restrictions and budget cuts, CASLS merged with Greater Boston Legal Services, Inc. (GBLS). However, until now CASLS has been able to maintain its Cambridge office and to continue to be a community-based legal services office for Cambridge residents.

As a result of further budget cuts, GBLS is considering whether or not to close the CASLS office to save money. In order to remain a community-based legal services office within Cambridge, we are seeking new funds to cover some of our extra space and related costs.

CASLS provides free, civil legal services to low income Cambridge residents with legal problems primarily in the poverty law areas of: housing, state and federal government benefits, elder law, and mental health/disability rights for adults and children with psychiatric and other disabilities.

* CASLS' housing work includes representing tenants facing eviction, denial of eligibility for public or subsidized housing, Section 8 terminations, and fair housing issues.

* CASLS' benefits work includes representing persons denied eligibility for or terminated from the full range of state and federally-funded public benefits (including SSI, SSDI, EAEDC, TAFDC, SNAP, and MassHealth).

* CASLS' elder law work includes the housing and benefits issues listed above, plus nursing home, elder abuse, and other elder-specific legal issues.

* CASLS' mental health/disability rights work for adults includes legal advocacy for access to, and rights within services from the state Department of Mental Health, Department of Developmental Services, and Mass Rehabilitation Commission. The mental health/disability rights work for children includes advocacy regarding rights to MassHealth-funded, home-based mental health services and related special education rights.

During calendar year 2013, CASLS provided legal services to 333 low income Cambridge households (families and individuals). CASLS also frequently provides legal advice, information and training, and technical assistance to staff of various local social service agencies in order for them to more ably assist their Cambridge clients. These agencies include the

Cambridge MultiService Center, the Council on Aging, CASCAP Resident Services Coordinators, Cambridge Health Alliance clinicians and staff, the Guidance Center, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services and other elder service providers, and many others. In 2013, we responded to more than 100 agency requests for legal assistance for Cambridge residents.

CASLS also regularly engages in extensive policy work to ensure access to affordable housing in Cambridge, and to ensure that the rights of low income public housing applicants and tenants are protected. This advocacy work is often pursued on behalf of the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants (ACT), which is the city-wide organization of public housing and Section 8 voucher tenants of the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). The CHA is one of a handful of housing authorities in the United States that was granted special permission from HUD to be free from most federal regulation and to develop its own housing programs. This “deregulation” makes it especially important for tenants’ voices to be heard and their legal rights protected. Over the last few years and/or currently, CASLS has engaged in the following policy work affecting thousands of low income Cambridge households:

- * extensive negotiations with the CHA regarding its overhaul of its Section 8 Administrative Plan (which sets forth the CHA’s rules and policies for the Section 8 voucher program and which affects more than 2500 households);
- * ongoing advocacy with the CHA over a new public housing lease and public housing policies (set forth in the CHA’s Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy that governs admission to and occupancy of the CHA’s public housing developments), which affects another 2500+ households;
- * ongoing negotiations for tenant protections as part of the CHA’s plans to change its public housing developments into a Section 8 project-based model (in order to obtain more funds for renovations);
- * negotiations for fair relocation plans and policies on behalf of public housing tenants being forced to relocate for building-wide renovations or demolition;
- * comments submitted each year (in writing and at public hearings) on the CHA’s “Moving to Work” Annual Plan, which is the document setting forth its plans for the upcoming year in the Section 8 voucher and public housing programs;
- * comments on the CHA’s new policy and lease addendum related to the upcoming smoking ban in its public housing developments;
- * in collaboration with other groups, negotiated with Forest City for preservation of affordability restrictions for 150 apartments in University Park and construction of another 25 affordable units elsewhere in the city; and
- * worked with tenants or tenant groups in four “expiring use” buildings which included developing a strategy of maintaining long term affordability of many apartments.

Hegel, Susan

From: Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli <pizzazeoli194@msn.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 03, 2014 7:30 PM
To: Hegel, Susan
Subject: FW: support policy order to keep CASLS in Cambridge

From: pizzazeoli194@msn.com
To: council@cambridgema.gov
Subject: support policy order to keep CASLS in Cambridge
Date: Sat, 3 May 2014 19:29:38 -0400

To the Honorable Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for policy order 0-7 regarding the city allocating an additional \$140,000 in funds annually to ensure that the office of Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) remain open, and that CASLS continue to serve lower-income Cambridge residents. CASLS has worked in collaboration with tenants, local non-profits, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), and the city's community development department to preserve hundreds of units of expiring-use housing in Cambridge. CASLS attorney Susan Hegel played the key role in drafting the preservation agreement for Inman Square Apartments. This agreement, which required that tenants elect to have their enhanced vouchers project-based, became the template for preserving Cambridge Court Apartments, Bishop Allen Apartments, and 402 Rindge Apartments.

CASLS also provides legal and technical assistance to the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants (ACT), the citywide organization representing CHA public housing and voucher tenants. It's important to know that CHA, as a Moving to Work agency, has the freedom to develop its own policies and programs. CASLS and ACT work closely together to educate tenants about the impacts of CHA's proposed policies and to create opportunities for tenants to have meaningful input in the decisions that are made about their housing.

I agree that the "loss of CASLS from this community would be devastating," particularly, for low-income tenants. It's worth pointing out that there are 700 units of affordable housing - at Briston Arms, the Close Building, and Fresh Pond Apartments - that are set to expire by 2020. The city should act now to keep CASLS in Cambridge.

Sincerely,

Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli
ACT Voucher Co-Chair

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation



“ Legal aid fought for us. To put it simply, we had a champion. ”

MLAC requests \$17 million for civil legal aid (0321-1600) in FY15¹

FY14 appropriation: \$13 million
Governor's recommendation: \$14 million

A benefit for Massachusetts and its neediest residents

In FY13, with \$12 million in appropriated funds, legal aid organizations brought an estimated \$28 million in new revenue and cost savings to the Commonwealth, including \$11 million in new federal dollars.

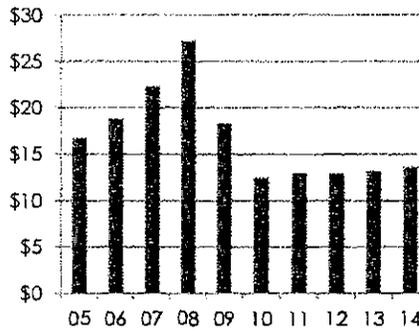
The legal aid fiscal crisis

51%

Amount MLAC has been forced to cut grants to legal aid programs, from \$27m in FY08 to \$13m in FY13

\$400,000

Approximate cut in grants to legal aid from the Massachusetts and Boston Bar Foundations in FY14 due to reductions in IOLTA revenue²



MLAC grants to legal aid programs by fiscal year, in millions¹

\$4 million

Additional revenue needed in FY15 to stabilize MLAC's grant-making capacity

85%

Expected drop in IOLTA revenue, MLAC's largest non-state funding source, from \$17m in FY08 to \$2.6m projected for FY14²

Growing population, declining staff

974,277

Individuals in the Commonwealth eligible for civil legal aid, according to the Census Bureau, an increase of almost 170,000 since FY08. Eligibility for MLAC programs is 125% of the federal poverty level (\$29,438 per year or \$566 per week for a family of four).

38%

Civil legal aid attorneys lost since FY08, a drop of 63 full-time positions. Some MLAC-funded programs have cut salaries, closed offices and laid off more than half of their attorneys. These layoffs will increase in the next few years without additional revenue.

>50%

People who seek help from a legal aid organization but are turned away due to a lack of resources. Their critical problems include housing stability, child custody conflicts, denial of unemployment insurance or healthcare coverage and domestic violence.

To learn more about the benefits of civil legal aid, visit www.mlac.org or contact:

Lonnie Powers, MLAC: 617-367-1414 | lpowers@mlac.org

Elaine O'Reilly & Mary Ann Walsh, Governmental Strategies: 617-447-5174 | 617-447-3711

oreilly@governmentalstrategies.com | mawalsh@governmentalstrategies.com

¹The appropriation funds general support grants for civil legal aid programs and dedicated grants for assistance to victims of domestic violence, help with disability benefits and Medicare advocacy. For more information visit www.mlac.org. ²The Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program funds access to justice initiatives and civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts, including MLAC. For more information visit www.maiolta.org.

³FY14 grants are projected. FY13 and FY14 grants do 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.