

Why Support MLRI?

MLRI's advocacy strengthens Massachusetts' position as a national leader in advancing progressive policies. Through systemic law reform, we help ensure that low-income and vulnerable people:

- » Have access to emergency assistance in times of need
- » Have housing that is safe, stable and affordable
- » Are not forced to choose between food and other essential needs such as heat and clothing
- » Have quality, affordable health care
- » Have access to quality education and employment
- » Have the legal support needed to escape an abusive relationship
- » Are not subjected to racially based inequities
- » Are empowered to advocate on their own behalf and participate in decisions that affect their communities

Despite the advances we have made, much work needs to be done to combat poverty and build a more just Commonwealth.

Every year, hundreds of individuals, foundations and law firms affirm their belief in our work by making a contribution to MLRI.

If you would like to support our efforts, please visit our website www.mlri.org. You may also contact Jamie Gilmore, Development Director, at 617-357-0700 ext. 345 or email at jgilmore@mlri.org. Thank you.

MLRI

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

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Fighting Poverty
& Injustice



Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

*Promoting economic,
racial and social justice
for low-income people
through legal action,
education and
advocacy*

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Cover Photo by Earl Docter, www.earldotter.com

MLRI: Taking a stand for justice and dignity for all

The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute is a non-profit organization committed to social and economic justice for low-income populations. Our advocacy promotes systemic reforms that help hundreds of thousands of very poor people in Massachusetts.

For over 40 years, MLRI has played a lead role in achieving reforms that have a lasting impact, including:

1969: Zoning Law for Affordable Housing

MLRI drafted the Chapter 40B zoning law, which has been directly responsible for the creation of more than 50,000 units of affordable housing

1978: Abuse Prevention Act

MLRI co-sponsored the Massachusetts Abuse Prevention Act, resulting in the issuance of 40,000 restraining order protections for abused women and children each year

1992: Securing Child Care

MLRI won a class action lawsuit securing child care for thousands of parents attending educational or training programs

1996: Expanding Health Care

MLRI and Health Care for All succeeded in a campaign to pass landmark legislation expanding health care to 300,000 uninsured children, low-income seniors and people with disabilities

2001: Food Stamp Advocacy Project

MLRI launched its Food Stamp Advocacy Project, which increased participation by 88 percent and tripled average monthly benefit amounts for recipients

2009: Protecting Tenants in Foreclosed Properties

MLRI successfully advocated for stronger laws protecting innocent tenants from eviction following the foreclosures of their rental properties

2008: Preventing Unlawful Detention of Immigrants

MLRI and its allies secured federal court victories striking down the mandatory detention without a hearing of permanent residents and refugees living in the U.S. for more than 10 years.

2008: Protecting Access to Emergency Shelter

MLRI persuaded the state to abandon proposed regulations which would have restricted access to emergency shelter for hundreds of homeless children and their families

2008: Promoting Asset Development

MLRI made recommendations adopted by the state's Asset Development Commission to eliminate policies that penalize and discourage families dependent on public assistance programs from accumulating assets

2005: CORI Reform

MLRI's advocacy, in collaboration with grassroots partners, led to the unanimous passage of a Boston City Council Ordinance requiring over 50,000 city vendors to implement fair criminal records screening and hiring practices

Justice and Opportunity

“Every state should have an organization like MLRI.”

MLRI takes a stand on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable people in Massachusetts, advocating for essential needs such as food, housing, health care and economic security.

We use legal advocacy to promote social and economic justice and empower low-income people and communities.

Far-Reaching Reform

“MLRI’s advocacy is impressive for its substantive breadth, sustained efforts and successful results.”

MLRI’s unique role in the legal community is to advance reforms that have a widespread impact.

We take on significant issues at the local, state and national levels, covering a broad range of poverty law areas, including:

Civil Rights	Health Care
Court Reform	Housing
Elder Law	Immigration
Employment	Public Benefits
Family Law	Racial Equity

MLRI Legislative Director
Debbie Silva



Photo by Sandra Quiles

Advocacy with Impact

“MLRI staff are at such a high level of expertise that they are looked to consistently as the experts in all of the substantive areas in which they work.”

MLRI is a leader in statewide advocacy that affects low-income people. Our staff:

- » **Litigate** and serve as co-counsel in high-impact cases
- » **Offer testimony** and track hundreds of legislative priorities
- » **Provide detailed analysis** of the state budget
- » **Negotiate** and comment on public policies and regulations issued by state agencies
- » **Research and document** the inequities that low-income people face and advance progressive solutions to these problems
- » **Share** effective solutions and strategies with other advocacy groups and policy makers nationwide

MLRI promotes economic, racial and social justice for low-income people through legal action, education and advocacy

MLRI Executive Director Allan Rodgers (left) receiving an award from Boston Foundation board member Kevin Phelan for MLRI’s outstanding work on CORI reform

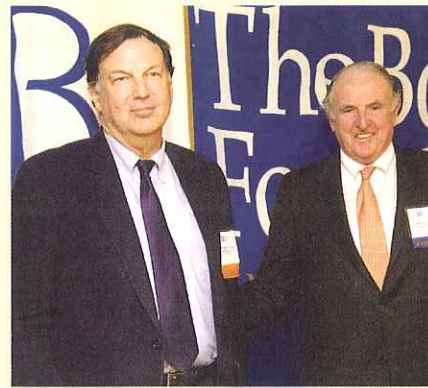


Photo by Richard Howard

Essential Support Services

“MLRI is one of the premier state support centers in the country.”

MLRI provides critical assistance and support to legal services providers and advocacy groups statewide so they can better serve their clients. MLRI staff:

- » **Train** hundreds of advocates every year on poverty law issues
- » **Advise** community organizations on the state, local and national level
- » **Coordinate** statewide coalitions that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of other advocacy groups

Publications

“The manuals MLRI staff write and update are truly exceptional.”

MLRI, in collaboration with Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education, produces Advocacy Guides that empower and inform individuals, advocates and attorneys on numerous topics, including food stamps, access to housing, tenants’ rights, health care and emergency assistance.

To order publications visit:
www.mlri.org/publications

MLRI staff left to right, sitting: Judith Liben, Sylvia deMurias, Jessie Hill, Allan Rodgers, Millie Peters, Amy Copperman, Iris Gomez; standing: Rochelle Hahn, Sandra Quiles, Lena Wilson, Fran Fajana, Susan Elsen, Vicky Pulos, Ernest Winsor, Denise Matthews-Turner, Peter Smick, Deborah Harris, Deborah Thomson, Shatilla Shera DeLeon, Patricia Baker, Jamie Gilmore, Virginia Benzan, Jeff Wolf, Gale Halpern, Annette Duke, Lea Downey, Jacqueline Humbert, Shannon Erwin; not in photo: Ruth Bourquin, Neil Cronin, Margaret Monsell, Caroline Robinson, Deborah Silva



Photo by Arjun Kataria

Web-based Resources

“MLRI remains the backbone of the Massachusetts civil legal aid delivery system.”

MLRI manages two legal services websites which contain a wealth of vital resources on poverty law for individuals, attorneys and advocates.

MassLegalHelp.org provides individuals with comprehensive civil legal information and answers to common legal questions in plain language, not “legalese,” enabling individuals to protect their rights and effectively advocate on their own behalf.

MassLegalServices.org is a website for legal services advocates featuring a collaborative workspace, calendar, find legal help directory, and a poverty law library of more than 10,000 documents. Many of these resources, such as unpublished decisions, briefs, resource manuals and updates on legislation, are not readily available anywhere else.

In 2009 alone, nearly 310,000 people viewed 2.6 million pages of legal information on MLRI’s website: MassLegalHelp.org

All quotations attributed to a 2008 independent assessment of MLRI conducted by three experienced, national peer reviewers.