

# Support \$5M in FY26 Budget for Access to Counsel (Line Item 0321-1800)

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## Current Status of the Statewide Access to Counsel Program

Through the FY25 budget, Massachusetts established a statewide Access to Counsel (ATC) pilot program with funding of \$2.5 million. Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC), which provides funding to civil legal aid organizations, is administrating the pilot. **The work is happening!**

## Support Access to Counsel (Line Item 0321-1800) at \$5 Million in FY26 Budget

- In January, Governor Healey's FY26 proposed budget included a dedicated line-item of \$2.5 million for Access to Counsel (Line-item 0321-1800).
- In April, House Ways and Means released its proposed budget and included \$3 million for Access to Counsel (Line-item 0321-1800). In addition, the House removed language (included last year) making this a pilot program. This is critical to stabilizing a permanent program.
- The ATC Coalition and MLAC are requesting a modest increase of \$2.5 million for a total of **\$5 million in FY26** to keep the current staffing investment and incrementally build the program.
- **Funding of \$5 million** would enable the program to build a solid foundation at a time when even more people are facing eviction.

## Why Access to Counsel is Needed to Address the Housing Crisis

Last year, only 6-7% of tenants had legal representation, while over 90% of landlords were represented. ATC provides **full representation** to level the playing field from the beginning of a case, not at the end when it may be too late. It prevents tenants from entering bad agreements and prevents people from becoming homeless.

## Who Supports Access to Counsel

Over [240 organizations](#) including the legal community, housing advocates, health care providers, large property owners, municipal officials, and others, are calling for a permanent statewide Access to Counsel program with funding that will grow the program incrementally.