

MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

MLSC

2025

Legislative Highlights in 2025

In 2025, MLSC focused its legislative efforts on strengthening and sustaining the Access to Counsel in Eviction (ACE) initiative, a highly effective program created by the Maryland General Assembly and administered by MLSC to help keep Maryland families housed. ACE has consistently demonstrated strong outcomes for tenants facing eviction, improving housing stability and reducing the long-term costs associated with displacement. Building on this success, MLSC worked to pass legislation that would remove the funding sunset on the \$14 million state appropriation and make this critical investment permanent.

While the effort received strong support from legislative champions and benefited from the dedicated advocacy of MLSC's grantee partners, Maryland's difficult budget environment ultimately limited what could be accomplished during the 2025 legislative session.

Even so, MLSC and its partners achieved meaningful progress. The General Assembly extended the funding sunset by an additional year, securing ACE funding through FY28, and giving us time to continue the fight for permanent funding. Additionally, legislation was passed to move the ACE Task Force to its permanent home within the Department of Housing and Community Development.

MLSC remains deeply grateful for the General Assembly's leadership and continued investment in ACE, and while permanent funding was not secured this year, we remain committed to working with legislators and grantees to build on this strong foundation in future sessions.

DEAR FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES,

As we reflect on FY2025, we do so with both pride in what we accomplished together and a clear-eyed understanding of the moment we are in. This was a year defined not only by growth and innovation, but also by thoughtful preparation—taking steps to ensure that MLSC remains strong, stable, and ready to support Maryland’s civil legal services community through whatever challenges lie ahead.

Throughout the year, MLSC continued to fulfill its core mission while strengthening its foundation. We welcomed new pilot grantees, awarded our first-ever three-year grants, reached full implementation of the Access to Counsel in Evictions program, and supported 51 grantee organizations across the state. At the same time, we made deliberate internal investments—bolstering our grant stabilization fund, modernizing systems, enhancing financial operations, and preparing our organization to weather economic uncertainty without compromising our commitment to the people and communities we serve.

The broader funding landscape reminds us that progress is rarely linear. FY2025 reinforced the importance of planning ahead, building reserves, and making careful decisions that allow us to remain responsive and resilient. While we remain optimistic about the future, we are also committed to being responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us, so that MLSC and our grantees can continue to deliver critical legal services during both strong and challenging times.

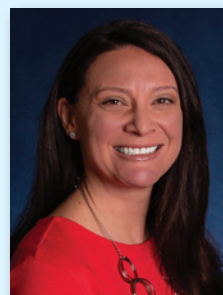
This year also marked a significant leadership transition for our Board. We said farewell to Board Chair Debra A. Thomas, who served MLSC with diligence and dedication as a board member since 2020, helping guide the organization through the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. As Chair since 2023, Debra provided steady and thoughtful leadership, including guiding MLSC through the search for and transition to a new Executive Director. We are deeply grateful for the time, expertise, and heart she brought to this role, and we know she will always remain a friend of MLSC. Looking ahead to FY26, we are excited to welcome a new board chair, Cathy Bledsoe, who has served on the board since 2021 and brings with her a wealth of experience championing for access to justice.

None of our work happens in isolation. We are deeply grateful to our grantees, partners, funders, legislative champions, and supporters who continue to stand with us. Your dedication makes it possible for MLSC to remain steady in uncertain moments and ambitious in pursuing a more just and equitable Maryland. We invite you to explore this Annual Report to learn more about the meaningful impact you helped make in FY2025—and to look ahead with us as we prepare for what comes next.

With gratitude and cautious optimism,



Catherine A. Bledsoe, Esq.
Board Chair



Michelle Daugherty Siri, Esq.
Executive Director

IN FISCAL YEAR 2025

MLSC awarded over \$60.5 million in operating, Judicare and special project grants to 47 nonprofits serving low-income Marylanders.

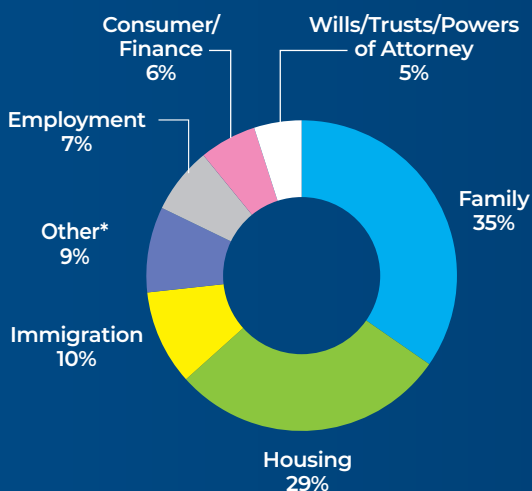
Our grantees closed over 73,000 cases, benefiting 159,147 people.

MLSC grantees closed cases in all 24 Maryland jurisdictions.

Over 2,500 attorneys donated more than 66,440 hours of service.

Legal aid providers helped clients obtain nearly \$25 million in economic awards and avoid or save over \$14 million in costs through their cases, for issues such as child support, consumer judgments and discharged debts.

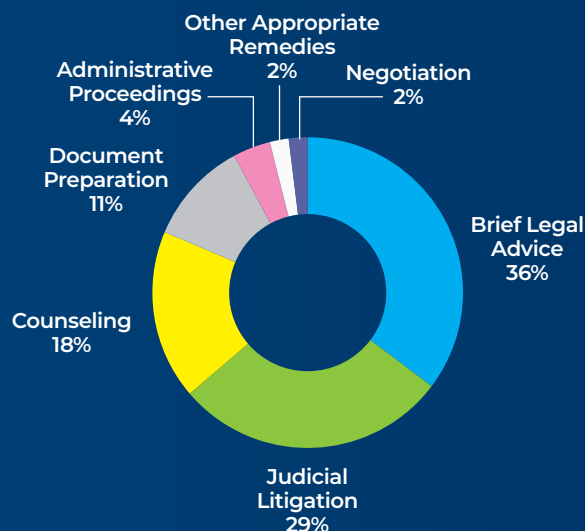
TYPES OF CLOSED CASES



*Individual rights, income maintenance, health, juvenile/CINA, education and miscellaneous.

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TYPES OF SERVICE



Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

MLSC GRANTEES

In the spring of 2025, and including subsequent adjustments in the fall, MLSC approved for the coming fiscal year \$34,302,681 in operating, pilot, intern and litigation fund grant awards to 45 organizations. In addition, through a \$2,913,830 grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts and other funds, MLSC approved funding in the amount of \$3,263,830 for the continuation of the Judicare project, which pays reduced fees to private attorneys for contested family law representation. Also, MLSC awarded \$5,000,000 restricted for immigration legal services. With funding from the Access to Counsel in Evictions program and other money, MLSC awarded \$19,679,054 for eviction prevention projects. An additional \$909,790 had been previously awarded to support fellowships during FY26. With statutory funding MLSC awarded \$225,000 to start the Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Grant Program. Starting in the spring of 2025 and through the fall and winter of 2026, MLSC also awarded one-time funding in the amount of \$491,929 for technology projects and to assist grantees who lost federal funding. **More information about the grant process, application deadline, and current grants are available at www.mlsc.org.**

- Allegany Law Foundation
- Amara Legal Center, Inc.
- Amica Center for Immigrant Rights
- Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
- Ayuda
- Baltimore Bar Foundation Senior Legal Services
- CASA, Inc.
- Catholic Charities of Baltimore
- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
- Child Justice, Inc.
- Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA)
- Civil Justice, Inc.
- Community Law Center
- Community Legal Services
- Disability Rights Maryland
- Equal Justice Works
- FreeState Justice
- Harford County Bar Foundation
- Heartly House
- HIAS, Inc.
- HopeWorks of Howard County
- House of Ruth Maryland
- Life Crisis Center
- Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
- Maryland Legal Aid
- Maryland Public Interest Law Project
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
- Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence
- Montgomery County Bar Foundation
- Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland
- Public Justice Center
- Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center of UMD Baltimore
- Rising for Justice, Inc.
- Sexual Assault Legal Institute
- Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC)
- Shore Legal Access
- Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy
- St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center
- Tahirih Justice Center
- United Way of Central Maryland
- University of Baltimore Foundation
- University of Maryland Carey School of Law Clinical Program
- Volunteer Legal Advocates
- Whitman-Walker Health
- Women's Law Center of Maryland
- World Relief
- YWCA Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

CASES CLOSED BY COUNTY

Disability Rights Maryland

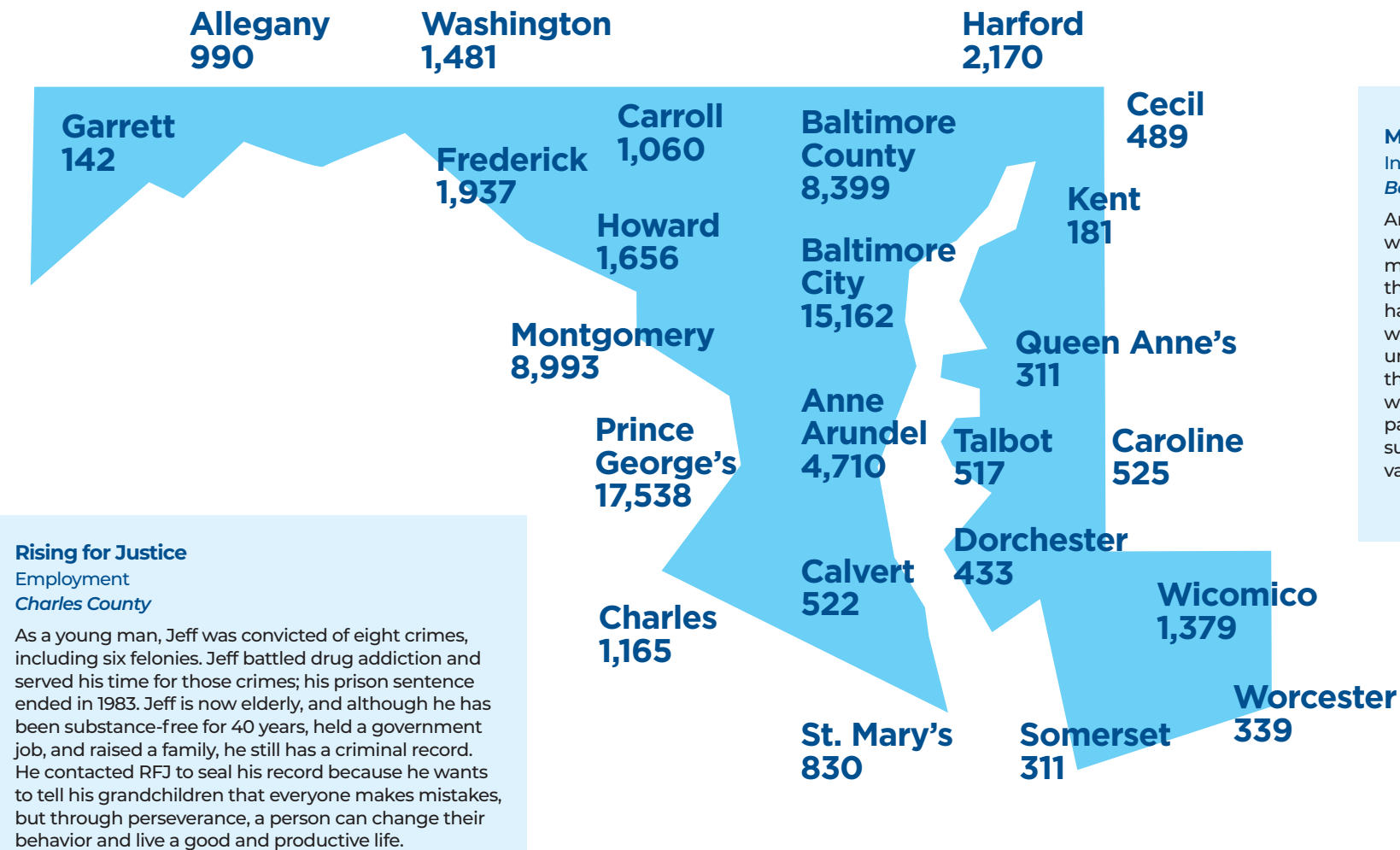
Education
Garrett County

DRM represented "Nick," a special education student recommended for a residential placement because there were no other options in the school district, violating the legal requirement to educate students in the least restrictive environment. DRM opposed the placement and successfully advocated for a non-public school placement for Nick instead. DRM filed a complaint with the State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE found a violation and, as part of system-wide corrective action, required the district to meet with MSDE to discuss steps to ensure a full continuum of special education placements in the district.

Community Law Center

Legal Assistance to Nonprofit
Montgomery County

A nonprofit that provides spiritual support to individuals living with sickle cell disease sought legal assistance to review a memorandum of understanding drafted by an organization it sought to deliver services to. A CLC pro bono attorney advised the client to draft its own agreement instead. Now, the client has a strong agreement that will serve as a template for future use as a service provider. The client was extremely satisfied and has since returned to CLC for additional legal assistance.



Rising for Justice

Employment
Charles County

As a young man, Jeff was convicted of eight crimes, including six felonies. Jeff battled drug addiction and served his time for those crimes; his prison sentence ended in 1983. Jeff is now elderly, and although he has been substance-free for 40 years, held a government job, and raised a family, he still has a criminal record. He contacted RFJ to seal his record because he wants to tell his grandchildren that everyone makes mistakes, but through perseverance, a person can change their behavior and live a good and productive life.

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts

Income Maintenance
Baltimore City

An MLSC-eligible client agreed to a creative project with a major corporation at a set fee. After two months of work and around \$5,000 in incurred fees, the client discovered their contact at the corporation had not secured project approval and was told they would not be paid. After eight months of unsuccessful attempts to resolve the issue themselves, the client contacted MDVLA. MDVLA paired them with a volunteer attorney, who negotiated full payment from the corporation. In their post-referral survey, the client expressed gratitude for "the validation that I deserve to be paid for my time."

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

Housing
Wicomico County

Our client moved out of her apartment, but her landlord refused to return her \$2,500 security deposit. The landlord falsely claimed the client did not notify them that she was moving out. After receiving assistance from her MVLS volunteer she shared, "It meant a lot to me that I wasn't going in there alone, and I was going in there with someone who was knowledgeable about the law. Just keep doing what you're doing, serving the people, being a voice for the people."

TYPES OF GRANTS

OPERATING



Part of MLSC's unique mission is to provide operating funding, helping legal services nonprofits across the state to keep their lights on and the lights of justice burning.

INTERNSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS



MLSC also funds internships for law students and fellowships for eviction defense attorneys, investing in a pipeline of public interest attorneys for years to come.

FAMILY LAW



The Maryland Judicare program, administered by MLSC and substantially funded through a grant from the Maryland Judiciary's Access to Justice Department, pays private attorneys reduced fees to accept contested family law cases.

EVICITION PREVENTION



This project funds full representation of residential tenants faced with eviction and includes the Access to Counsel in Evictions program created in 2021 by Maryland's General Assembly, which is under way with a goal of full implementation by October 2025.

WILLS



Created by statute in 2023, the Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Grant Program provides eligible seniors with certain estate planning documents.



ACCESS TO COUNCIL IN EVICTIONS

Highlight Facts

Since its launch in 2022, the Access to Counsel in Evictions (ACE) Program has closed more than 25,000 cases in total. With FY2025 marking the conclusion of the three-year implementation phase, ACE has transitioned from initial start-up to a period of sustained service delivery, ongoing refinement, and long-term impact.

In FY2025, MLSC awarded grants to nine nonprofit legal services providers and two Maryland law schools to carry out the ACE program. Funding for the program was provided through the ACE Special Fund, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program Phase 2, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds, and Baltimore City's separately funded Right to Counsel in Evictions program. Together, these grantees handled 13,103 ACE cases across every jurisdiction in Maryland, an impressive 44% increase from the previous year. In 86.7% of cases, tenants received full legal representation from service providers, and with that support, 81% of households avoided disruptive displacement. This outcome was particularly critical given that 14.4% of those clients would otherwise have experienced homelessness. Overall, in FY2025, the ACE program directly impacted 30,000 individuals, out of which approximately 13,000 are children.

To support this growing volume of cases and ensure equitable access to representation, the Coordinated Intake system (CIS) played a critical role in FY2025. In response to increased demand, CIS expanded intake hours, onboarded new staff, and added bilingual specialists. Compared to FY24, CIS more than doubled the number of cases placed with a legal service provider and connected an additional 4000+ tenants to brief legal advice, social services and other benefits to support housing stability.

In FY2025, MLSC reaffirmed its commitment to meeting tenants where they are by awarding extended 18-month contracts to nine tenant outreach and education organizations. Through a combination of digital and in-person efforts, these groups reached more than 150,000 tenants this year.

Taken together, these services, intake, and outreach efforts translated into strong outcomes for Maryland households. ACE grantees helped Maryland residents secure more than \$459,000 in housing judgments and avoid more than \$7.7 million in costs. According to independent program evaluator Stout, the ACE Program provides approximately \$46.7 million in annual fiscal impacts and economic benefits, amounting to a \$3.04 return for every \$1 invested by the state.

Shore Legal Access

Housing

Talbot County

The client fell seven months behind on rent, owing over \$10,000, due to several changes in circumstances. The client's spouse had suddenly left the family; the client alone became responsible for household expenses and their four children. Shortly after, the client lost their job and their military benefits were inexplicably paused. The client made partial rent payments when they could but quickly fell behind. If evicted, the client and their four children would have been unhoused. At rent court, the judge recommended the client speak with Shore Legal Access. SLA negotiated a stipulated dismissal with the landlord's representative. The client and their children remain in their home and the client has secured a new job and will be able to make full, timely payments.

CASA, CLSPGC, MLA

Housing

Prince George's County

Heather Hill Apartments is a 459-unit multifamily rental community in Temple Hills, Prince George's County, Maryland. In May 2025, the landlord filed more than 240 failure-to-pay-rent cases against tenants, despite dangerous living conditions pervasive throughout the property. Tenants reported at least 49 distinct threats to life, health, and safety, including widespread rodent infestations, bedbugs, roaches, mold, electrical hazards, severe flooding, structural deficiencies, and repeated loss of water, heat, and electricity. Many tenants withheld rent in response to these conditions.

In June 2025, three MLSC grantees, Community Legal Services of Prince George's County, Maryland Legal Aid, and CASA jointly represented tenants and secured stays of eviction in more than 200 cases after establishing that the landlord lacked a required debt collection license and that related matters were pending in Circuit Court. In July, the organizations filed a Friend of the Court brief seeking to extend this relief to all tenants at Heather Hill. The District Court granted the request, staying 246 failure-to-pay-rent cases pending resolution of related Circuit and federal court proceedings.

In September 2025, Attorney General Anthony Brown announced that the Consumer Protection Division entered a Final Order by Consent with Heather Hills for violations of the Consumer Protection Act and the Consumer Debt Collection Act. The order requires an estimated \$11.2 million in restitution to Heather Hills tenants - the largest landlord-tenant restitution award ever obtained by the Consumer Protection Division. As part of the settlement, Heather Hill is to dismiss all eviction actions against tenants whose rent balances are eliminated by the restitution.

MLSC ANNUAL AWARDS

Each year, MLSC solicits nominations and presents awards to individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to the provision of legal services to low-income Marylanders. MLSC held its annual reception on November 18, 2025, at Westminster Hall in Baltimore. MLSC Board Chair Cathy Bledsoe, MLSC Executive Director Michelle Siri and Maryland Supreme Court Chief Justice Matthew Fader presented the awards.



Left to Right: Award recipients Jessica Morgan, Saraah Lang, Chandler C. T. Walters, Leslie Seid Margolis, Hon. Melvin J. Jews.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Hon. Melvin J. Jews
Arthur W. Machen, Jr. Award

Leslie Seid Margolis
Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award

Saraah Lang
Rising Star Award

Jessica Morgan
Chandler C. T. Walters
William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award

MLSC IS PLEASED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE 2025 AWARDS RECEPTION SPONSORS



Partner

Ballard Spahr, LLP
DLA Piper
Gordon Feinblatt LLC
Gross, Mendelsohn & Associates
Maryland Legal Aid
Maryland State Bar Association
Public Policy Partners
Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC
Zuckerman Spaeder LLP

Supporter

BGS Law, LLC
Catherine Bledsoe
Honoring Sally B. Gold, stalwart advocate and supporter of multiple MLSC grantees
Gorges & Company
Law Offices of Debra Thomas
Law Offices of Mark B. Martin, P.A.
Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company
Hon. Pamela J. White

Media Sponsor



IOLTA HONOR ROLL

This joint initiative of the Maryland State Bar Association and MLSC consists of financial institutions that pay premium rates on IOLTA accounts, supporting critically needed legal aid for low-income Marylanders. We salute these institutions and encourage our supporters to patronize Honor Roll members.



MLSC REVENUE

MLSC revenue for grants is primarily generated from the MLSC Fund, which is composed of three special funding sources:

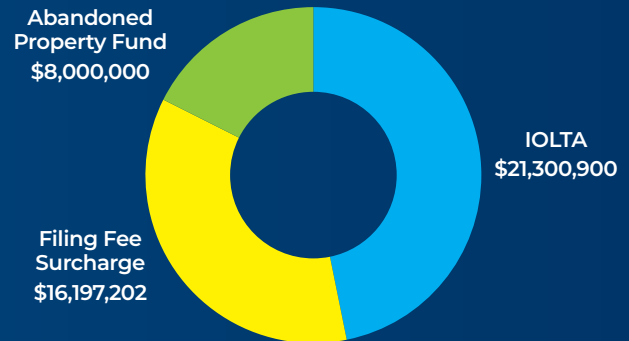
Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) held by Maryland-licensed lawyers

A surcharge on certain Circuit and District Court filing fees

\$8,000,000 from the Abandoned Property Fund

MLSC Fund Revenue

During FY25, the MLSC Fund received total revenue of nearly \$45.5 million.



Summarized Financial Information

Statement of Net Position June 30, 2025

Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$5,603,493
Investments	44,004,966
Receivable, IOLTA Receipts	1,723,592
Due from State of Maryland	801,417
Grants Receivable	2,259,765
Grant Advances	380,175
Other Receivables	1,343
Prepaid Expenses	64,770
Capital Assets - Net of	
Accumulated Depreciation & Amortization	49,708
Deferred Compensation Investments	83,284
Other Assets	1,600
Total Assets	54,974,113
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	426,662
Deferred Revenue	8,381,614
Due to State of Maryland	1,723,592
Deferred Compensation Obligation	83,284
Right-of-Use Leases	22,596
Total Liabilities	10,637,748
Net Position	
Net Investment in Capital Assets	49,708
Unrestricted	42,717,834
Temporarily Restricted	1,568,823
Total Net Position	\$44,336,365

Statement of Activities For the Year Ended June 30, 2025

Program Expenses - Legal Assistance	\$61,861,287
General Revenues	
State of Maryland Appropriations - Legal Assistance	35,000,000
Eviction Prevention - ACE funds	15,352,761
Increased Access to Counsel Programs - AOC Funds	3,600,000
Judicare Program - AOC Funds	2,913,830
Government Grants	3,227,486
State of Maryland Affordable Wills	184,320
State of Maryland Housing Security Grant	-
Cannabis Program - AOC Funds	-
Outreach and Education Reimbursement - ACE Contributions	37,867
Annual Awards Reception	22,150
Investment Income, Net	2,840,921
Total General Revenues	\$63,179,335
Increase in Net Position	1,318,048
Net Position at Beginning of Year	43,018,318
Net Position at End of Year	\$44,336,365

The report is a summary of the financial statements incorporated in the annual audit report issued by Gross, Mendelsohn, & Associates, P.A. for the year ended June 30, 2025. The complete financial statements and notes are available upon request from MLSC.

*See page 5 for grant commitments made at the close of FY 2025.

MLSC BOARD

Catherine A. Bledsoe, Esq.
Howard County
Office of the Attorney General

Allison N. Banks
Baltimore City
NeoSystems, LLC

Mike Bellis
St. Mary's County
Historic St. Mary's City

Terry V. Jackson
Harford County
NASA

Linda H. Lamone, Esq.
Anne Arundel County
State Administrator of Elections (Retired)

Saad Malik, Esq.
Baltimore County
Gordon Feinblatt

Hon. C. Philip Nichols, Jr.
Prince George's County
Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Retired)

Phyllis G. Scalettar, Ph.D.
Montgomery County
Corporate Advisor

Michelle Daugherty Siri, Secretary
(ex officio)
Maryland Legal Services Corporation

MLSC STAFF

Michelle Daugherty Siri, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer /
Executive Director

Kaa Andam
Director of IOLTA

Joy Hamilton
Grants Administration Assistant

Shawdae Harrison
IOLTA Coordinator

Athana Kontinos
Director of Information
and Operating Grants

Deborah Krchma
Accountant

Casondra Kus
Grants Coordinator

Dave Pantzer, Esq.
Chief Program Officer /
Deputy Director

Karen Wabeke, Esq.
Director of Special Programs

Cindy Wallace
Chief Financial Officer / Chief Operating Officer

Leaf Ye
Program Coordinator



ABOUT MLSC

The Maryland Legal Services Corporation, established in 1982 by the Maryland General Assembly, is a nonprofit organization governed by a nine-member Board of Directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. MLSC distributes funds from the Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts program and other sources to nonprofit organizations for the provision of civil legal services to low-income Marylanders. MLSC currently provides funding to 36 nonprofit grantees throughout Maryland to ensure that eligible clients in all areas of the state have access to legal assistance. MLSC also administers Maryland's Access to Counsel in Evictions program.

FUNDING LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVING THE ENDS OF JUSTICE

ABOUT IOLTA

Attorneys routinely receive client funds to be held in trust for future use. In the case of amounts that are small or to be held for a short time, attorneys must place these funds into Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA). The generated interest is used by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation for grants to programs that provide civil legal services to low-income Marylanders.



MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION