

# **SB252.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher West

Position: FAV

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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 29, 2026

The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Senate Bill 252 – Maryland Legal Services Corporation – Board of Directors – Membership**

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am here to introduce Senate Bill 252. This legislation would increase the number of members of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) from nine to twelve voting members, along with some other minor changes regarding how many voting members must be admitted to the Maryland Bar or consist of nonlawyers. While this is all we are asking for, it is a necessary update on the law. The amount of work and oversight for MLSC has consistently increased over the years. However, the number of board members has never increased, and the board has an important job. The board is responsible for approving all grant awards and meeting with grantees as part of its oversight function. As the number and diversity of MLSC's grantees have grown, it is increasingly difficult for nine board members to manage the necessary engagement and review processes. Expanding the board to twelve members would distribute the workload more equitably and provide a broader range of perspective and expertise.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 252 and will be happy to answer any questions.

# **SB252\_MLSC\_Favorable\_Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michelle Siri

Position: FAV



# MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

IOLTA - INTEREST ON LAWYER TRUST ACCOUNTS

## **Senate Bill 252**

### **Maryland Legal Services Corporation – Board of Directors – Expansion**

#### **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Hearing Date: January 29, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Legal Services Corporation (“MLSC”) respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 252, which would expand the MLSC Board of Directors from nine to twelve members.

MLSC’s mission is to ensure low-income Marylanders have access to stable, efficient, and effective civil legal assistance through the distribution of funds to nonprofit legal services organizations across the state. The Maryland General Assembly created MLSC in 1982 to administer the state’s Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, and since that time MLSC grantees have assisted millions of Marylanders with a wide variety of civil legal needs.

In recent years, MLSC has experienced historic growth in both the amount of funding it distributes and the scope of its statutory responsibilities. The number of MLSC grantees has grown from just five organizations in 1986 to more than fifty today, with sixteen new grantees added in the last five years alone. In 2022, MLSC was also named the administrator and funder of the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program, further expanding the Board’s oversight responsibilities.

The MLSC Board of Directors is responsible for approving all grant awards and ensuring fiscal accountability and effective governance. As the number and diversity of programs and grantees have increased, it has become increasingly difficult for a nine-member board to carry out these duties at the depth and level of engagement required. Expanding the Board to twelve members would distribute the workload more equitably and allow MLSC to benefit from a broader range of perspectives and expertise. Furthermore, Senate Bill 252 would have no fiscal impact on the State nor on small businesses.

For these reasons, Maryland Legal Services Corporation strongly supports Senate Bill 252 and respectfully urges a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Siri, Executive Director, at [msiri@mlsc.org](mailto:msiri@mlsc.org) or 443-961-5596.

# **Letter of Support with Amendments SB252 HB330 2026**

Uploaded by: Alita-Geri Carter

Position: FWA



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January 27, 2026

**BILL: SB 252 / HB 330 – Maryland Legal Services Corporation - Board of Directors - Membership**

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings (Senate) / Judiciary (House)

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments (FWA)

**RE: Strengthening MLSC Governance through Community Lived Experience**

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Honorable Members of the Judicial Committee,

I am Alita-Geri Carter, the owner of Qualequity Access, LLC., a consultancy grounded in data-driven transformation that advocates for quality, equity, access, and accessibility in healthcare and education. I am the mother of two children with disabilities, a former practicing nursing practitioner, special education parent advocate, and public health servant. I am writing to offer a **Favorable with Amendments report on SB 252/HB 330**.

While I support the expansion of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) Board to 12 members to meet the growing needs of civil legal aid oversight, the current appointment process remains a closed loop of political selection that risks silencing the very voices the Corporation is designed to serve.

To ensure the Board reflects the skill, knowledge, and direct experience of the community, I respectfully request the following amendments:

**1. Mandate Lived Experience in Civil Legal Aid**

The bill currently distinguishes only between "lawyers" and "nonlawyers". This is insufficient to ensure client-centered governance.

- Amendment: Require that at least two of the five nonlawyer seats be filled by individuals with lived experience as former clients of civil legal aid or as community advocates with documented expertise in navigating civil legal systems.

**2. Establish a Self-Nomination and Community Review Process**

Currently, the appointment power rests solely with the Governor, often resulting in appointments of political favorites or legal vendors rather than grassroots leaders.

- Amendment: Create a formal self-nomination pathway that allows community members to apply directly for Board consideration.



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- Amendment: Establish a community advisory screening committee to review these applications, ensuring that candidates are selected based on their demonstrated skill and knowledge of community needs rather than political proximity.

### **3. Decrease "Gatekeeping" in Appointments**

By opening the process to self-nomination, the State can decrease the systemic "gatekeeping" that prevents qualified, marginalized voices from participating in high-level policy decisions. This ensures the Board is not just a collection of "legal experts," but a body that understands the real-world barriers families face when seeking justice.

### **Conclusion**

The expansion of the MLSC Board is a necessary step, but size alone does not guarantee equity. We must move beyond a model where community members are spoken *for* and instead create a structure where they speak *for themselves*.

I urge a **Favorable with Amendments report on SB 252 and HB 330.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Alita-Geri Carter, MSN, DNP-C, CPNP-PC, BCPA  
Resident, Howard County, MD