



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony

HB330 - Maryland Legal Services Corporation Board Membership Update

Good morning Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and distinguished members of the committee. I am Delegate Aaron Kaufman, representing District 18 in Montgomery County, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB330 Maryland Legal Services Corporation Services Corporation - Board of Directors Membership.

House Bill 330 proposes a modest but important structural update by expanding the MLSC Board of Directors from nine to twelve members. This change reflects the significant growth in the scope, scale, and complexity of MLSC's responsibilities since its creation.

The Maryland General Assembly established MLSC in 1982 to administer grant funding for civil legal services using proceeds from the State's Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts, or IOLTA. Under current law, the Corporation is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor. At the time of its creation, MLSC oversaw a relatively small network of grantees and programs.

Over the past four decades, MLSC's role has expanded substantially as the General Assembly has repeatedly entrusted the Corporation with additional responsibilities critical to access to justice in Maryland. MLSC's grantee network has grown from just five organizations to nearly fifty legal services providers operating across the State. These organizations deliver legal assistance in areas including housing stability,



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domestic violence protection, consumer law, public benefits, and family law often serving Marylanders at moments of acute crisis.

More recently, the General Assembly has assigned MLSC major new programmatic duties, including administration and oversight of the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program, established through legislation enacted in 2022. This program significantly expanded MLSC's operational footprint, fiscal oversight obligations, and coordination with courts, legal service providers, and State agencies.

MLSC board members carry substantial fiduciary and governance responsibilities. The board is responsible for overseeing grant agreements, monitoring compliance and performance, ensuring fiscal accountability, and setting strategic direction for a statewide legal services infrastructure. As the number of grantees, funding streams, and statutory responsibilities has increased, so too has the workload placed on the board.

House Bill 330 recognizes that growth and responds accordingly. Expanding the board from nine to twelve members will strengthen governance capacity, distribute oversight responsibilities more effectively, and allow the board to draw on a broader range of expertise to meet the demands of a growing organization. Importantly, this bill does not alter MLSC's mission, independence, or appointment structure it simply ensures that the board is appropriately sized to carry out the work the General Assembly has assigned to it.

In short, as MLSC has grown, the governance structure supporting it must grow as well. House Bill 330 is a pragmatic, forward-looking adjustment that will help ensure MLSC remains a strong, accountable steward

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of public trust and continues to support high-quality legal assistance for low-income Marylanders across the State.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 330.