

2024 - 2025 IMPACT REPORT

**MASSACHUSETTS
BLACK LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION**

DATE:
June 18, 2025



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Letter from the President

Dear Esteemed MBLA Members, Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association (MBLA), thank you for an incredible 2024-2025 programming year.

Serving as MBLA President has been both a rewarding and humbling experience. Building on the foundation laid by my predecessors, we focused on elevating the holistic well-being of our members - financially, emotionally and physically. To advance these efforts, we developed targeted programming focused on financial literacy, navigating student loan debt as well as on fostering emotionally intelligent and inclusive workplaces. We organized opportunities for physical movement, including creating a MBLA team for the Boston 2024 Lawyers Have Heart 5K and our June 2024 fitness fundraiser.

In addition, we created initiatives to support our members' professional development and overall career satisfaction, including the MBLA's inaugural Judicial Academy Program. This comprehensive program is tailored to educate and prepare our members for the judicial nomination and clerkship application processes, enhancing our members' readiness for the application and nomination stages, and ultimately contributing to a more diverse and inclusive Massachusetts judiciary.

We also made the MBLA more accessible to our law student members through the launch of our MBLA Tabling Tour Initiative, where we set foot in all nine Massachusetts law schools. This event series helped us to better connect with our law student members statewide, including in Springfield, Dartmouth and Andover.

Internally, we focused on strengthening the MBLA's operational framework by engaging board governance and fundraising professionals to ensure that we remain informed as to board governance best practices and continue to build a strong foundation for the future of the organization. We also created additional fundraising opportunities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the MBLA and our Law Student Scholarship Program - raising an impressive **\$154,193.98** in profit during this programming year! This is the highest amount we've raised in nearly a decade, marking a major milestone for our organization!

I am deeply grateful to my outstanding Leadership Team for their hard work and dedication. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Avana Epperson-Temple

2024-2025 President, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association

MBLA Leadership Team



Avana Epperson-Temple
President



Jameel Moore
President-Elect



Sania Santos
Vice President



Morenike Adams
Treasurer



Nakisha Skinner
Secretary



Tiffanie Ellis-Niles
Immediate Past President
**resigned as of*
February 24, 2025 due to
Judicial Appointment

MBLA Leadership Team



Tyrus Cartwright
Director



Evan Coleman
Director



Theresa Coney
Director



Steve Hanton
Director



Christelle Jean - Felix
Director



Michael Kippins
Director

MBLA Leadership Team



Tasha Marshall
Director



Bethany Serota
Director



Arianne Waldron
Director



Jaivy Dickson
Chief of Staff



Madison Long
Student Affairs Liaison

Mission

The MBLA is dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal field while advocating for systemic change to promote justice and equality in our communities. Through education, mentorship, and collaborative action, we strive to create a more inclusive and equitable legal industry while addressing the systemic challenges faced by Black individuals.

History of the MBLA

The MBLA proudly stands as the oldest affinity bar organization in Massachusetts, founded on March 2, 1973, with a mission to elevate the presence and influence of Black legal professionals in Massachusetts. As a beacon of advocacy and empowerment, we are committed to uplifting our members, amplifying their voices, and driving positive societal change for generations to come.

Our founding board members include Clarence E. Dilday (President), Grover G. Jackson (Treasurer), Solomon B. Watson (Clerk), Richard A. Soden, Dennis R. Tourse, and Warren E. Wood. The MBLA's founding members include Hon. Frederick L. Brown, Wayne Budd, Margret Burnham, James Dilday, Clarence Elam, Bruce Hubbard, Norman W. Huggins, Henry Owens, Salim Shakur, Helaine Simmonds, and Fletcher "Flash" Wiley.

In 2023, the MBLA celebrated its 50th Anniversary Year, recognizing our founders and their enduring legacy at our 2023 Gala. Watch the commemorative film linked below to learn more about our journey and legacy.

[MBLA 50th Anniversary Film](#)

Program Year Highlights

Well-Being Initiative

We launched an Emotional Well-Being Task Force to support our members' holistic well-being, with a focus on combatting burnout, fostering psychological safety in the workplace, and stress management in high-pressure work environments. In collaboration with our wellness consultant Melissa Alexis MFA, CPC, we provided thoughtful newsletter content and hosted impactful programming such as our Post-Election Wellness Kickback and our Work Well: Strategies for Wellness, Balance and Emotional Health Event in December 2024. Supporting our members' well-being was a central focus throughout our 2024-2025 programming year, and we were proud to extend this support to Western New England's Black Law Students Association via a virtual panel regarding tips to support one's own well-being.

Financial Literacy Initiative

We created a Financial Literacy Task Force to address the financial challenges many of our members face after law school, particularly the burden of student loan debt. To equip our members with practical tools and knowledge, we brought in leading experts including Kelley Ferguson, Director of Financial Wellness and Business Development at Onyx Rising, Sabrina Correia of STC Coaching, Student Loan Attorney and Forbes Contributor Adam Minsky, and Massachusetts Student Loan Ombudsman Arwen Thoman, to cover relevant topics from budgeting to student loan repayment strategies.

Law School Tabling Tours

This year, the MBLA proudly visited all nine law schools across Massachusetts, making meaningful connections with students statewide through informational tabling events. Spearheaded by our dedicated MBLA Student Affairs Liaison, Madison Long, this initiative was designed to increase awareness of the MBLA's programs, events, and scholarship opportunities that support the academic and personal development of future Black lawyers.

These tour events gave MBLA Leadership the opportunity to connect directly with law students, share valuable resources, answer questions, and foster a strong sense of community. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many students expressing excitement about the MBLA's offerings, as well as an eagerness to get involved and apply for scholarships.





Judicial Academy

This year, thanks to the visionary leadership of MBLA Director Theresa Coney, the MBLA developed and launched its inaugural Judicial Academy Program - a groundbreaking initiative designed to support individuals aspiring to advance to the bench and increase diversity within the Massachusetts judiciary.

Co-led by MBLA Director Theresa Coney and Past President Jermaine Kidd, the program ran from September 2024 to February 2025, and welcomed seven participants into a confidential and supportive environment. Through tailored workshops and events, participants received practical guidance, individualized feedback, equipping participants with the tools needed to prepare for the judicial nomination and clerkship application processes successfully. Participants engaged with judges from every level of the Massachusetts court system, as well as with current and former Judicial Nominating Committee members.

Coney and Kidd worked alongside a distinguished Advisory Board consisting of MBLA Past Presidents, former judges and individuals with critical insight into the application and interview processes. Our Advisory Board Members are listed below:

Attorney Joseph Feaster, Co-Chair
Retired Judge Leslie Harris, Co-Chair
Senator William “Mo” Cowan
Retired Judge Barbara A. Dortch-Okara
Retired Judge Shannon Frison
Retired Justice Geraldine Hines
Attorney Walter B. Prince
Attorney E. Macey Russell

One of the key highlights of the Judicial Academy Program was the cohort's participation in mock interviews and application reviews. These sessions gave participants the opportunity to refine their skills, receive tailored feedback, practice answering tough questions and build confidence.

The inaugural year of the Judicial Academy was a tremendous success. As we look ahead, we are excited to expand and refine the program, continuing to offer meaningful support to individuals seeking to secure a judicial nomination.

Testimonial:

"The Judicial Academy offered by the MBLA is by far the best training on how to successfully navigate the judicial nominating process in Massachusetts.

It lifts the veil into the judicial nomination process and shows practical ways of approaching the process. We learned from experienced attorneys on how to properly approach writing of the judicial application and participated in mock interviews with judges. During the training, I gained new friends and found valuable mentors.

I would highly recommend the Judicial Academy to any African American attorney interested in applying to become a judge in Massachusetts."

- 2024-2025 Judicial Academy Program Participant

Acknowledging Our Volunteers and Sponsors

The success of our inaugural Judicial Academy Program would not have been possible without the dedication and support of numerous individuals and organizations. We extend our deepest gratitude to the volunteers, especially the many judges, who generously shared their time and expertise to mentor and guide our participants throughout the program.

Judicial Academy Mentors and Speakers: A heartfelt thank you to the mentors and speakers who volunteered their time to share their insights, provide personalized feedback, and offer strategic guidance to our participants. Their invaluable support helped shape the participant experience and contributed to the growth of each participant.

Program Sponsors: We also wish to acknowledge the organizations whose generous sponsorships made the Judicial Academy even more impactful:

Goulston & Storrs PC
Dain, Torpy, Le Ray, Wiest & Garner P.C
Todd & Weld LLP
Prince Lobel Tye LLP
Boston Bar Association

goulston
storrs &



DAIN | TORPY

T

W

Todd & Weld LLP



PRINCE
LOBEL



Boston Bar

A S S O C I A T I O N

Judicial Academy Kick-Off Event



Judicial Academy Graduation



Fundraising Efforts

Fitness Fundraiser

Last June, the MBLA hosted its first-ever fitness fundraiser, which featured a yoga class and a 305 cardio dance class led by MBLA President and Healthworks fitness instructor, Avana Epperson-Temple. Both classes were designed to be inclusive and open to all fitness levels. All proceeds from the fundraiser went directly to support the MBLA's Building the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Wine Tasting Fundraiser

Last September, the MBLA hosted its second Wine Tasting Fundraiser at the Urban Grape in the South End. Fifty people gathered for an intimate and engaging event that brought together members of our community in support of raising funds for our Building the Legacy Scholarship Fund. The event featured curated alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine selections and a reception.

MBLA Gala

On Friday, April 11, 2025, we proudly celebrated our 52nd anniversary at our 2025 MBLA Gala. The Gala brought together 600+ of our members, supporters, partners, and allies to reflect on an impactful year of programming and honor our phenomenal 2025 Gala Honorees: Tanisha Sullivan, Esq. and Rodney Pratt, Esq., both recipients of the MBLA's 2025 Trailblazer Award, and Marie St. Fleur, Esq., our 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award honoree. The Gala serves as both a celebration of our mission and a vital source of support for our ongoing work and law student scholarships.

Recognizing Our Board Members

Awards

We are proud to celebrate the accomplishments and recognition of MBLA Board Members, who were honored with prestigious awards throughout the programming year. These accomplishments are a testament to their leadership, expertise, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

We would like to congratulate the following MBLA Board Members on their well-deserved honors:

Avana Epperson-Temple, President:

2025 Pinnacle Award, Emerging Executive, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

57 Most Influential Black Attorneys in the Northeast Award, NEBLSA

Jameel Moore, President-Elect:

2024 Top Women of Law, Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly

Christelle J. Jean-Felix, Director:

2025 Up & Coming Lawyer, Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly

Tyrus Cartwright, Director:

57 Most Influential Black Attorneys in the Northeast Award, NEBLSA

Steven J. Hanton, Director:

57 Most Influential Black Attorneys in the Northeast Award, NEBLSA

Tasha Marshall, Director:

57 Most Influential Black Attorneys in the Northeast Award, NEBLSA

Arianne Waldron, Director:

Justice Geraldine Hines Racial Justice Award, Boston College Public
Interest Law Foundation

Judicial Appointments

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize new judicial appointments during this programming year:

Judge Tiffanie Ellis-Niles, Immediate Past President:

Appointed as an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Juvenile Court,
March 2025

Judge Caryn Mitchell-Munevar, Member:

Appointed as an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Probate and
Family Court, December 2024

These milestones represent not only the hard work and dedication of the individuals involved but also the continued growth and influence of our organization within the legal community and beyond.



Supporting Our Students

MBLA Scholarship Fund: Building the Legacy

Each year, the MBLA awards up to \$16,000 in scholarships to talented and deserving law students. Each of the MBLA's four scholarships is named in honor of individuals whose dedication, vision, and impact continue to inspire us. These scholarships are designed to recognize exceptional students who demonstrate academic excellence, leadership potential, and a commitment to making a difference in their communities.

**The Honorable Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland
Leadership and Juvenile Advocacy Award**
(\$2,000)

The Honorable Reginald Lindsay Public Service Award
(\$2,000)

The Fletcher "Flash" Wiley MBLA Legacy Scholarship Award
(up to two students, \$5,000 each)

The Honorable Justice Geraldine S. Hines Civil Rights Award
(\$2,000)

Five-Year Initiative

This year, we set - and reached - the ambitious goal to fully fund each of our law student scholarships for five years, ensuring we can continue building on the legacy of Fletcher “Flash” Wiley, Chief Justice Ireland (Ret.), the late Judge Lindsay, and Justice Hines (Ret.).



The graphic features the MBLA logo at the top, followed by the text "Building The Legacy" in a script font and "Scholarship Program" in a sans-serif font. Below this, there are four portrait photographs of individuals, each with a caption identifying them and the award they represent.

			
The Fletcher “Flash” Wiley MBLA Legacy Scholarship Award	The Honorable Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland Leadership and Juvenile Advocacy Award	The Honorable Reginald Lindsay Public Service Award	The Honorable Justice Geraldine S. Hines Civil Rights Award

Thank You to Our Program Sponsors!

We extend our deepest gratitude to our generous sponsors for their unwavering support throughout this program year. Their contributions, including funding, provision of meeting space, and other resources, have been essential in enabling us to deliver impactful programs and events.

Black & Bogdanow, P.C.
Boston Bar Association
Boston Lawyers Group
Champagne Law Group
Covington & Burling LLP
Dain, Torpy, Le Ray, Wiest & Garner, P.C.
Eastern Bank
EMK Consulting Group, LLC
Frison Law Firm, P.C.
Goodwin
Goulston & Storrs PC
Holland & Knight
Iandoli, Desai & Cronin, P.C.
Law Office of Nadine Champagne
Leader Bank
Martignetti
Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association
Massachusetts Bar Association
Massachusetts Black Women Attorneys
Massachusetts National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
Meehan, Boyle, Black & Bogdanow, P.C.
National Bar Association
Nixon Peabody LLP

Northeast Black Law Students Association
Onyx Group
Prince Lobel Tye LLP
Sidley Austin LLP
Silva Santos, PC
Suffolk University Law School
The Boston Kidd Family
Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts
Worcester County Bar Association

Ways to Get Involved

BECOME A MEMBER

Joining the MBLA as a member is more than just about joining an organization. It is about being part of a dynamic and robust community committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal field while advocating for systemic change to promote justice and equality in our communities. As a member you will:

- Expand your network;
- Access our Exclusive Member-Only Events and Programming, including our Judicial Academy Program; and
- Invest in your professional growth via our mentorship and professional development initiatives.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

We rely on the dedication and expertise of volunteers to bring our programs and events to life. By volunteering, you will have the opportunity to directly contribute to our mission and make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Whether it is mentoring, event planning, or helping behind the scenes, your time and talents can have a lasting impact. Join us!

DONATE

Financial support is crucial in allowing us to continue to scale and expand our initiatives, programming and impact. Please consider making a donation to the MBLA today. Your donation can help fund our law student scholarships, organizational initiatives, operational costs and programming. Every contribution, no matter the size, helps move us closer to our goal of creating lasting change. Make a donation [here](#).

PARTNER WITH US

We welcome partnerships with individuals, businesses, and organizations that share our vision. From co-hosting events to providing in-kind donations, partnerships play a vital role in our success. If you would like to partner with the MBLA, please email us at president@mablacklawyers.org. Thank you!

SPREAD THE WORD

Help us amplify our impact by sharing our mission and work within your network. Whether it is through social media, word-of-mouth, or connecting us with potential supporters, your advocacy helps raise awareness and increase the reach of our efforts.

**To learn more about the different ways you can contribute, visit
<https://mablacklawyers.org/>**



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please fill out the survey by scanning the QR code below or following this link:

<https://bit.ly/44fvcn7>



Contact Us



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www.mablacklawyers.org



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