



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

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For Immediate Release

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Maryland Legal Aid Names Second Deputy Chief Counsel

BALTIMORE, Md., (August 3, 2020) - Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Chijioke Akamigbo as the second Deputy Chief Counsel for MLA. In his new role, Chijioke will provide oversight and guidance to chief attorneys and staff in the Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Midwestern Maryland (Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties), and Western Maryland (Allegheny and Garrett counties) offices.

MLA's other Deputy Chief Counsel, Gina Polley, provides the same for MLA's offices in Anne Arundel County, Metropolitan Maryland (Howard and Prince George's counties), Montgomery County, Northeastern Maryland (Cecil and Harford counties), Southern Maryland (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties), and the Eastern Shore.

Chijioke has served as the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance's (MCLA) Managing Director since September 2018. MCLA, MLA's wholly-owned subsidiary formed in 2017, operates the District Court Self-Help Resource Centers in Baltimore City, Catonsville, Glen Burnie, Salisbury, and Upper Marlboro; and the Maryland Self-Help Centers in Frederick and Annapolis (call center only). Chijioke oversaw the opening of the self-help centers in Catonsville and Frederick, and led MCLA staff to serve a record 108,497 pro se litigants in 2019. Since July 20, 2020, when MCLA re-opened its court-based walk-in services to the public, MCLA has served 531 walk-in visitors.

Chijioke began at MLA in 2014 as a staff attorney supporting the self-help centers and was promoted a year later to Supervising Attorney. Prior to joining MLA, he maintained his own law practice in Montgomery County, where he represented homeowners associations, small businesses, and immigration clients. He is a graduate of Northwestern University School of Law and The University of Iowa.

MLA's Executive Director Wilhelm Joseph shared, "Chijioke is a proven leader, whose ideas and commitment to providing high-quality service to clients are reflected in his actions. Most recently, during the COVID-19 health situation when the provision of walk-in assistance was no longer possible, Chijioke worked with Maryland Judiciary leaders to guide MCLA staff through the temporary transition to provide increased remote assistance by telephone and online chat."

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About Maryland Legal Aid

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a private, non-profit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to people who are in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties from 12 offices. As Maryland's 3rd largest law firm, MLA handles cases involving a wide range of issues, including family, housing, government benefits, healthcare, education, employment, and consumer law. MLA also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 14 jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, people with developmental and mental health disabilities, nursing home and assisted living residents, and veterans seeking benefits and assistance with related legal issues also receive

representation through special projects. MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative, which includes its *Lawyer in the Library* program, assists with expunging criminal records to remove barriers to obtaining housing, employment, and child custody through clinics held in libraries, community centers, non-profit organizations, places of worship, schools, medical facilities, and other gathering places.

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