At a recent State House briefing, the statewide network of community mediation centers celebrated $12M ROI and 6 years of legislative support

Boston – The state’s dispute resolution agency known as the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) and its 12 local Community Mediation Center partners (CMCs) were at the State House on January 23 for their annual legislative briefing and to celebrate six years of consistent legislative support for their state-sponsored grant program established to promote the use of mediation and create broad access to these services for all citizens of the Commonwealth.

David Cash, dean of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston where MOPC is housed, commented, “This is a unique program that uses an investment from the State to ensure that core center operations can leverage an army of volunteers whose programs, training, and a wide range of conflict services allow cities and towns and their citizens to save many times that investment.”

In Fiscal Year 2017, the CMCs received $600,000 collectively to support their network of 500 well trained and committed volunteers who handled over 4,300 court-referred and community-based mediation cases for primarily low-income citizens.
During FY2017, an estimated $12 million annual return on investment in cost savings and resources leveraged was demonstrated by MOPC’s FY2017 Year End Program Evaluation Report. The report highlighted the continued need for increased funding to stabilize and grow the services provided to meet local community needs, thus maximizing return on investment and building new opportunities for funding.

Since 2012, the statutory Community Mediation Center Grant Program administered by MOPC has earned substantial bi-partisan legislative support in both the House and Senate, championed in the first five years by the program’s original leads, Senator Benjamin Downing and Representative Sarah Peake. This year Senator Adam Hinds and Representative Paul Tucker have taken over as legislative leads and both participated in the recent briefing. This support has been especially valuable in a year which began with the Governor’s veto of the grant program’s budget appropriation causing considerable financial uncertainty for the CMCs, compounded by funding reductions from the Attorney General’s Consumer Mediation Program and the Mass Bar Foundation.

MOPC Executive Director Susan Jeghelian says, “Centers work, with very limited budgets and staffing, to develop and grow the services they offer to make sure they are meeting the particular challenges of the day.” She explained that two areas of growth emerged with the introduction of restorative practices in schools to reduce costs around truancy and suspensions and to improve school climate as well as a pilot program to provide pre-release prisoners with services to build supportive relationships and plans with people on the outside to significantly reduce recidivism.
Other areas of services offered by the CMCs include mediation of consumer, neighborhood, family, divorce, school, housing, work-place, minor criminal, harassment prevention and juvenile diversion cases, facilitation, conflict coaching and conflict management training.

The CMCs and MOPC celebrated the significant support of the Legislature on January 23 and hope that it will be influential on the Baker Administration in seeing the value of this effective evidence-based program and the cost benefits it brings to Beacon Hill and communities across the Commonwealth.

For more information about the Community Mediation Center Grant Program and the CMCs it supports, please visit

http://www.umb.edu/mopc/projects/community_mediation_center_grant_program