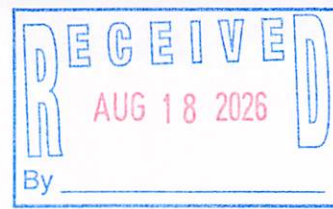


ADM2025-01403



Subject: Authorize Nonlawyer Legal Help in Tennessee: Comments on No. ADM2025-01403

Dear Clerk Hivner and Honorable Justices of the Tennessee Supreme Court,

I am writing in response to the Court's request for comments on the regulation of the legal profession and the access-to-justice crisis. I strongly support the Tennessee Supreme Court allowing people without law degrees—like legal helpers or community justice workers—to deliver legal services and help with basic civil legal needs.

On behalf of The Love Kitchen in Knoxville, Tennessee, I am writing to express our support for the Court's efforts to expand affordable and accessible legal help for Tennesseans. For many of the individuals and families we serve through our meals-on-wheels program, food pantry, and community outreach, legal challenges are often closely connected to the hardships they are experiencing. Many of our neighbors are seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families living on limited incomes. When they encounter legal issues—such as housing concerns, benefits problems, family matters, or debt—they often do not know where to turn for help and cannot afford the cost of traditional legal representation.

In our daily work serving the Knoxville community, we regularly meet people who are struggling not only with food insecurity but also with complicated systems and paperwork that affect their stability and well-being. Without guidance, even relatively small legal problems can quickly escalate and create serious consequences for vulnerable individuals. Efforts to develop programs that allow trained helpers or community-based legal assistance to support people with certain legal needs could make a meaningful difference for many of the individuals we encounter. Providing more accessible pathways to basic legal guidance would help people better understand their options, navigate legal processes, and address issues before they become crises.

We appreciate the Tennessee Supreme Court's leadership in exploring innovative ways to expand access to justice across the state. Initiatives that make legal help more affordable and accessible will strengthen communities and help ensure that the justice system works for all Tennesseans. Thank you for your commitment to improving access to justice and for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Across our state, many people cannot obtain the legal help they need. Lawyers are simply too expensive for most families, and in many counties there are not enough attorneys available.

I encourage the Court to prioritize low-barrier solutions that make basic legal help available right away. Legal helpers could complete short, practical training focused on specific subjects and provide assistance through trusted institutions such as nonprofits, libraries, faith groups, and businesses. Requiring lengthy training or expensive credentials risks recreating the same lawyer-only bottleneck under a new label.

The Court should also recognize that certain forms of basic legal assistance—like helping someone navigate court procedures or complete standard paperwork—are low-risk activities that

should fall outside Unauthorized Practice of Law restrictions. Creating clear carveouts for this type of help would expand access without sacrificing consumer protection. Tennesseans already benefit from existing consumer protection laws that safeguard against misconduct.

I'm grateful that the Tennessee Supreme Court is leading this effort to reform and modernize our legal system. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Martin Riggins, Executive Director, The Love Kitchen

Knoxville, TN

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