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INFORMATION FOR RELEASE

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Legal Aid Society Announces Partnership to Expand Conservatorship Offerings

*The nonprofit joins with Nelson Mullins and the Association of Corporate Counsel
Tennessee Chapter to assist clients in more conservatorship cases*

NASHVILLE, Tenn., June 29, 2020 — Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland, Tennessee’s largest nonprofit law firm, announced today that it will partner with Nelson Mullins and the Association of Corporate Counsel Tennessee Chapter (ACC TN) to provide assistance for parents and guardians wishing to seek conservatorship for young adult family members who have acute special needs or who are medically incapacitated.

Conservatorships are established for people who have been deemed gravely disabled by the court and lack the ability to make or communicate significant responsible decisions concerning their health or safety for themselves. Under a conservatorship, a judge appoints a conservator with the authority and responsibility to make some or all important decisions regarding medical care, treatment care provisions, finances, benefits, education and living arrangements.

The legal system is designed to protect citizens’ rights to make decisions for themselves, including young adults with profound disabilities or medical conditions, who are traditionally expected to make their own financial, educational and medical decisions when they turn 18.

“Conservatorships protect the young adults who are suddenly expected to make significant life decisions when they turn 18 but are unable to do so,” said Norah Rogers, pro bono administrator for Nelson Mullins. “We are very careful not to take away anyone’s legal rights.

Instead, we want to help the young adults who are incapable of making those important decisions and ensure the people who have their best interests at heart are making them.”

Under Legal Aid’s new partnership, attorneys will assist in conservatorship cases for young adult family members who have acute special needs or who are medically incapacitated due to severe autism, nonverbal autism, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injuries and chromosomal conditions. Nelson Mullins’ staff will train members of the ACC TN and their volunteer pro bono attorneys on conservatorship proceedings. Once trained, the attorneys will begin accepting screened and eligible pro bono cases from Legal Aid Society.

“We are thrilled to work with Legal Aid Society and Nelson Mullins in these cases,” said Stephanie Chambers, ACC TN Public Interest and Advocacy Committee Chair. “There are a lot of in-house corporate lawyers who want to help with pro bono cases but don’t have the opportunity. Cases of conservatorship are extremely meaningful, and there is also a clear, paper-driven process similar to many corporate cases. It’s the perfect way for our members to extend a helping hand to those less fortunate.”

“Those struggling just to provide food and shelter often can’t afford legal fees — that’s why our organization exists,” said Andrae Crismon, director of Legal Aid Society’s Volunteer Lawyers Program. “We’ve seen young adults who are mentally disabled but not under conservatorship being put into housing facilities, given medication and even taken advantage of financially, all without really understanding what is happening. Parents and guardians want to protect their loved ones from these situations, and it’s really special to help them through that process. Because of our partnership with the ACC TN and Nelson Mullins, we’ll be able to help even more young adults and their families.”

To learn more about this program or other services offered by Legal Aid Society, please contact the firm at 800-238-1443 or visit www.las.org.

About Legal Aid Society

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland Mountains advocates for fairness and justice under the law. The nonprofit law firm offers free civil legal representation and educational programs to help people in its region receive justice, protect their well-being and support opportunities to overcome poverty. It serves 48 counties from offices in Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Gallatin, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge and Tullahoma. Legal Aid Society is funded in part by United Way. Learn more at www.las.org or by following the firm on [Facebook](#).

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