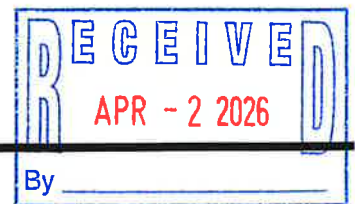


Kim Meador



From: Lydia Yousief <lydia@grassrootsmessages.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2026 11:07 AM
To: appellatecourtclerk
Subject: Expand Legal Help in Tennessee: Comments on No. ADM2025-01403

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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 Tennessee's access-to-justice crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue.

My name is Lydia Yousief. I'm a Coptic woman who grew up in the Nashville area to two immigrant parents, and I founded and currently direct Elmahaba Center in South Nashville, TN. Elmahaba Center is the only Arab-led, Arab-based organization in Middle Tennessee dedicated to serving Arabic-speaking peoples. I strongly support this accessibility measure for multiple reasons, but mainly because, within the Egyptian community (the largest of the Arabic-speaking communities in Middle Tennessee), because we have only a few lawyers who have passed the bar, and because the legal profession is very different in Egypt, there are a lot of con men who use the term "lawyer" in Arabic to describe themselves, swindle people hundreds (sometimes thousands) of dollars, and move on without accountability. We need to make the law accessible, especially when people's lives are at stake, like a mother trying to flee from an abuser, or an immigrant who's confused about a ticket, or a person unaware of what benefits are available. We need systems in place that are safe and help connect people. I think this initiative normalizes seeking help and ensures that people are not in unsafe circumstances, that mistakes don't spiral, and that people understand that the law is a protection, not a weapon.

Across our state, people struggle to access the legal assistance they need; lawyers are too expensive for most people, and many counties are classified as legal deserts because there just aren't enough lawyers to go around.

I strongly endorse the Court's suggestion that people without law degrees could deliver legal services and support authorizing legal helpers to assist with basic civil legal needs. This is a smart, compassionate, and practical way to make justice more accessible.

I urge the Court to focus on low-barrier approaches that expand access to basic help now. Authorized legal helpers could receive short, modular, and accessible subject-matter training, and work under the supervision of non-profits, libraries, community and religious centers, and legal businesses. Licensure that requires extensive training or costly credentialing risks recreating the lawyer-only bottleneck under a different name, while there are countless routine, low-risk legal needs that could be met today by a neighbor who has undergone a short online course.

The Court should also consider clear carveouts from Unauthorized Practice of Law rules for low-risk

legal assistance, like helping individuals understand court processes and filling out paperwork, which should not be treated as the practice of law. Tennesseans who would receive this help are already protected by existing consumer protection laws, negating the need for the enforcement mechanism that comes with licensure.

Allowing legal helpers would put help directly where people need it - in libraries, churches, and community centers - and ensure that people are not shut out of our justice system simply because of where they live or how much money they have.

I'm grateful that the Tennessee Supreme Court is leading this effort to reform and modernize our legal system. I encourage you to authorize the delivery of legal services by legal helpers and continue exploring ways to ensure that every Tennessean can get the legal guidance they need, when and where they need it.

Sincerely,

Lydia Yousief
Nashville, TN