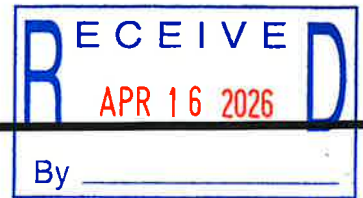


Kim Meador



From: Tabi Upton <tabiu@grsdelivery.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2026 6:42 PM
To: appellatecourtclerk
Subject: Expand Legal Help in Tennessee: Comments on No. ADM2025-01403 from CHATT Foundation

Warning: Unusual sender <tabiu@grsdelivery.com>

You don't usually receive emails from this address. Make sure you trust this sender before taking any actions.

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

I do community engagement for a homeless nonprofit, the CHATT Foundation. Over forty years ago, we started as the Chattanooga Community Kitchen, and fed the hungry each year by the hundreds of thousands. Over that time, we also added other services for the homeless, like shelter and clothing and counseling. Today, we are no longer just a Kitchen. We are a Foundation for hope.

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. 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.

Expanding access to civil legal help is important because many homeless individuals face multiple levels of obstacle to housing; one is lack of funds for legal help. They need help with expungements, disability applications, evictions, and more. I support letting people without law degrees provide legal help because the system is overloaded. Therefore, even with nonprofits like legal aid, the need outpaces the availability of help. We need lay people who are trained to provide low-level legal assistance.

I would want legal helpers to have short subject-matter training that can be done online and mentoring/point person to consult with; and I would want legal helpers to be able to assist with specific issue areas, like expungements, disability, and mediation for divorces.

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,

Tabi Upton
Chattanooga, TN
tabiu@chattfoundation.org