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May 15, 2014

Hon. Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye  
Chief Justice of California  
350 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Request for Judicial Council to Convene a Task Force on Limited Conservatorships

Dear Chief Justice:

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Judicial Council.

In January 2006 Chief Justice Ronald M. George convened a Probate Conservatorship Task Force and directed it to conduct a comprehensive review of the probate conservatorship system in California. The actions of the Chief Justice were prompted, in large measure, by a series of articles published by the Los Angeles Times that called public attention to major problems with the general conservatorship system.

The stories published by the Los Angeles Times also caught the attention of the California Legislature. Hearings were conducted and new legislation was enacted.

The actions of the legislative and judicial branches focused almost entirely on general conservatorships. No particular attention was given to limited conservatorships for people with developmental disabilities.

The time has come for a comprehensive review of the limited conservatorship system. Our Project has done its own "mini-audit" of this system as it is operated by the Los Angeles Superior Court. Our preliminary findings have caused us to convene a conference on May 9, 2014, and another is scheduled for June 20. A copy of our preliminary report, *Justice Denied*, is enclosed. A copy is being sent to all members of the Judicial Council. We are also reaching out to the Legislature and to other statewide elected officials.

We do not know how limited conservatorships are processed in other counties, but if what is happening in the largest Superior Court in the state is any indication, there is a major statewide deprivation of justice that is happening to a very vulnerable population – one that is unable to adequately advocate for itself. If Los Angeles County is unique, then thousands of people with disabilities in that jurisdiction are being deprived of equal protection of the law (in addition to violations of other constitutional and civil rights).

Our Project is calling on you to convene a Task Force on Limited Conservatorships to review the limited conservatorship system statewide, with a special focus on Los Angeles County. Members of the Task Force should include a wide range of perspectives, from inside and outside of the legal profession. My colleagues and I at the Disability and Abuse Project are willing to be of assistance. We have considerable experience in working with study commissions and task forces on matters involving policy and law reform.

What we do to solve these problems will affect tens of thousands of existing limited conservatees in California and thousands more whose cases are processed each year. Therefore, we should act with all deliberate speed. I look forward to your reply.

cc: Judicial Council members

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas F. Coleman".

THOMAS F. COLEMAN

Legal Director

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