



2100 Sawtelle, Suite 204, Los Angeles, CA 90025 • (818) 230-5156
www.disabilityandabuse.org • tomcoleman@disabilityandabuse.org

January 7, 2015

Hon. Carolyn Kuhl
Presiding Judge
Los Angeles Superior Court
111 N. Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Problems with the processing of limited conservatorship cases

Dear Judge Kuhl:

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss serious problems with the processing of limited conservatorship cases in the Los Angeles Superior Court.

These problems have been well documented. (<http://disabilityandabuse.org/index-2.htm>) They were brought to the attention of the Presiding Judge of the Probate Division in 2014. They were also called to the attention of the Chief Justice of California and to the Judicial Council and its Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee. A voting rights complaint is pending with the Department of Justice.

Virtually all key aspects of the Limited Conservatorship System have significant deficiencies. There are serious shortcomings in the manner in which all participants fulfill their official roles in these cases – judges, court-appointed attorneys, court-investigators, and Regional Centers. The judges have not been sufficiently trained on how to insure that people with developmental disabilities are given equal access to justice. PVP attorneys are not properly trained on issues critical to their advocacy role for such clients and are generally not providing effective assistance as required by due process. Court investigators were eliminated in such cases for several years and are only now being phased back into the process. The enclosed report documents that these investigators have not been properly trained. There are also major problems with the way in which Regional Centers are evaluating clients and submitting reports to the court about their capacities.

Perhaps with new leadership at the Superior Court, including a new Presiding Judge in the Probate Division, this would be a good time to start a constructive conversation about these deficiencies and the changes that need to occur to insure that limited conservatees and proposed limited conservatees receive the justice they deserve. Our Project, which is leading the call for reform of the Limited Conservatorship System, would welcome an invitation to meet with you and Judge Maria Stratton to discuss these issues and to identify ways to improve the situation in Los Angeles County.

cc: Judge Maria Stratton

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas F. Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "Coleman" clearly legible.

THOMAS F. COLEMAN