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NEWS RELEASE

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Executive Director Who Significantly Grew Philadelphia-based Legal Clinic for the Disabled Announces Retirement; Successor Appointed

Summary:

The Board of Directors of the Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD) announced the retirement of long-term Executive Director Linda Peyton and the appointment of her successor, Theresa Brabson, LCD's Legal Director for five years. Peyton's leadership team transformed the agency through medical-legal partnerships and initiatives that place legal advocates where potential clients need them most.

After 15 years leading the Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD), Executive Director Linda Peyton will retire at the end of May 2024. The LCD Board of Directors has named LCD's Legal Director, Theresa Brabson, as Peyton's successor, ensuring a seamless transition and continued growth for the organization that provides free legal services to low-income people with disabilities, chronic health conditions, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the Philadelphia region. A search for the next Legal Director of the Clinic will begin immediately.

During Peyton's tenure, LCD has transformed from a small number of attorneys doing telephone intake out of a one-room office at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital to a nationally-recognized leader in the medical-legal partnership (MLP) movement, an approach that provides immediate access to a legal advocate within preventative medical settings to identify and address unmet legal needs before they reach a crisis point, yielding better client health outcomes.

In her first decade as Executive Director, LCD's impact grew tenfold, increasing from 250 cases in 2008 to serving more than 2,000 clients in 2018. LCD continues to handle over 2,000 cases annually, proactively screening over 75,000 low-income individuals and families to date for unmet legal needs through six medical-legal partnerships across nine diverse hospitals and health centers in the most impoverished neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

During her tenure, LCD helped establish and continues to be a member of the Philadelphia Eviction Prevention Project (PEPP) through which clients facing eviction are referred to LCD for eviction defense assistance. LCD's pro bono reach has grown substantially, and LCD now holds regular Community Legal Outreach Clinics in community settings where people with disabilities live or receive services.

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Peyton dedicated her career to advancing access to justice. Prior to joining LCD as a Staff Attorney and Director of its anti-violence initiative in 2003, she spent 20 years with the Defender Association of Philadelphia as a trial and appellate attorney. She is known for her ability to identify and implement creative methods to reach clients and to tirelessly pursue effective solutions to break the cycle of poverty and injustice. Peyton received the Philadelphia Bar Foundation's 2019 Award for her notable devotion to vulnerable and underserved clients.

"It has been an honor to have been a part of LCD's team for the past 20 years and to have served as Executive Director since 2008," Peyton reflected. "I am incredibly proud of the clinic's resilience and growth over the years and, while leaving is bittersweet, I leave knowing that LCD's team is one of the strongest we have experienced to date and the organization is in very capable hands. I look forward to seeing what the future brings for this remarkable agency."

"With every decision she has made as an attorney and a nonprofit leader," Board of Directors Chair Regina Nelson stated, "Linda has defended, promoted, and protected her clients' interests. LCD clients, stakeholders, volunteers, and all Philadelphians have benefitted from the steady, dedicated leadership of Linda Peyton over nearly two decades. The Board of Directors is grateful to Linda for her quiet, competent strength at the helm and at the heart of LCD. We wish her the best and hope she enjoys her well-deserved retirement."

The LCD Board moved decisively to appoint Peyton's successor. "The Board of LCD is delighted to announce the selection of Theresa Brabson as LCD's next Executive Director," Nelson affirmed. "Theresa's dedication to the Clinic and its mission is evident to anyone who knows and has worked with her. As a leader on the executive team for five years, she is the natural successor to Linda Peyton. Linda and Theresa worked side by side to construct the partnerships that have greatly expanded the reach of LCD. As Executive Director, Theresa will continue and enhance the sustainability of the organization and its impact on the lives of people with disabilities and chronic health conditions in the region."

After interning with LCD throughout law school, Brabson joined the staff full-time as an Independence Foundation Public Interest Fellow in 2013, after which she served as the project director of PhilaKIDS, LCD's medical-legal partnership with St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. Since 2019, she has served as Legal Director, overseeing all of LCD's legal programs with particular focus on expansion of the Medical-Legal Partnership Initiative. Her work has helped to engage new stakeholders, increase financial opportunities, and reach further into LCD's target community.

Brabson helped Peyton grow LCD to its largest staff size yet, and she was instrumental in establishing LCD's most recent partnerships within the MLP Initiative. Brabson has presented both nationally and internationally on the MLP model and LCD's successful MLP Initiative. In addition to her work as Legal Director, she mentors staff on a variety of issues, including child custody, support, public benefits, landlord/tenant disputes, and domestic violence. Brabson graduated from Temple University Beasley School of Law (J.D., *magna cum laude*) and The George Washington University (B.A., *magna cum laude*).

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“I was immediately drawn to LCD’s mission and service model when I joined the organization as a summer intern in 2011,” stated Brabson. “Since then, I have had the privilege of working with and learning from Linda Peyton as LCD grew into the amazing organization it is today. Linda has modeled and encouraged the integrity, compassion, and grit that make a truly great leader and advocate. I will call on the lessons I have learned from her for the rest of my career. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to lead LCD and support our wonderful advocates who make our mission possible.”

A search for the next Legal Director of LCD will begin immediately.

About the Legal Clinic for the Disabled:

The Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD) provides free legal services to low-income people with disabilities, to people with chronic health conditions, and to the deaf and hard of hearing in Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties. Since its incorporation in 1987 by Magee Rehabilitation Hospital, the Young Lawyers Divisions of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and the Young Lawyers Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association, LCD, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, has helped thousands of Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

LCD provides a variety of civil legal services, including assistance to victims of domestic violence to get legal protection from their abusers, representation of victims of identity theft and consumer fraud, assistance to parents and caregivers to gain access to healthcare for their children, and relief for families facing habitability issues or eviction. Most of LCD’s clients have disabilities that affect their daily activities, and many have experienced catastrophic injuries or illnesses like stroke, spinal cord or brain injury, multiple sclerosis, cancer, advanced diabetes, glaucoma, AIDS, amputation, or epilepsy. LCD’s services help them overcome legal barriers that impact their ability to live safely and independently in their communities.

LCD offices are in Center City Philadelphia. LCD also has attorneys and paralegals based across nine sites within the Philadelphia area as part of the organization’s Medical-Legal Partnership Initiative through which LCD trains healthcare staff to identify social determinants of health that are legal in nature and affect positive healthcare outcomes. www.lcdphila.org

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Attached:

Photo of Linda Peyton

Photo of Theresa Brabson