



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MVLS Executive Director, Bonnie Sullivan, to Retire; Board of Directors Names Susan Francis New ED

Organization Begins Search for New Director of Program Management

BALTIMORE, August 8, 2019 – Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service ([MVLS](#)), the largest provider of pro bono civil legal services to low-income Marylanders, announced today that its executive director, Bonnie Sullivan, will retire after more than 11 years of dedicated leadership, and the organization’s current deputy director, Susan Francis, will become the new executive director. With this change in leadership, MVLS is actively seeking a new director of program management.

“The board of directors expresses its sincere gratitude to Ms. Sullivan for her many years of unwavering service, her commitment to growing the reach of the organization’s legal services throughout Maryland, and her vision of creating a better life for those in need of legal services,” said E. Hutchinson Robbins, MVLS board of directors president. “Ms. Sullivan always had a broad vision for expanding access to justice – one that supported and unified the state’s other legal services organizations. Her dedication has greatly benefitted the Maryland pro bono legal community and the lives of all state residents seeking legal services.”



Under Ms. Sullivan’s leadership, MVLS significantly increased its presence throughout Maryland, including increasing its funding by 56 percent, expanding its programs and services, and doubling its number of staff. Her efforts helped the organization embrace technology innovations to deliver legal services in new ways, reaching underserved Maryland communities beyond Central Maryland. Ms. Sullivan’s achievements have not gone unnoticed. In 2018, she was the recipient of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation’s Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award, the Women’s Law Center of Maryland’s Access to

Justice Award, and the Daily Record’s Maryland’s Most Admired CEO’s Award. She also received the Daily Record’s Maryland’s Top 100 Women Award in 2012.

“It has been a true honor to lead Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service – an organization that has touched so many lives throughout the past 38 years, including my own,” said Bonnie Sullivan. “I extend a heartfelt thank you to the MVLS board of directors, my colleagues, our volunteer lawyers and all of my legal services peers for giving me the opportunity to create a strong vision for access to justice in Maryland. With the leadership of Deputy Director Susan Francis, MVLS has expanded its community partnerships and advocacy with the goal of effecting systemic change, especially in the areas of housing and consumer law. I have confidence that under her leadership Maryland will make dramatic progress in bridging the “Justice Gap.” I plan to continue working toward these goals as an active MVLS volunteer.”



Susan Francis will become the new executive director on October 1, 2019. Ms. Francis has played a pivotal role in MVLS’s current success, serving first as the organization’s foreclosure prevention project manager in 2013 and then quickly promoted to the deputy director leadership role in 2014. She brings years of nonprofit and advocacy experience to MVLS and will continue to lead MVLS’s core pro bono program as well as its consumer and housing work.

“It has been a true partnership working side-by-side with Ms. Sullivan as MVLS’s

deputy director. She has always put MVLS's mission before her own needs, showing me how to selflessly lead," commented Susan Francis. "I'm thrilled to grow my leadership role within the organization to continue executing on our strategic plan, which will expand our community outreach, build deeper engagement with our volunteer attorneys and uncover new strategic partnerships with state and city departments, so more Marylanders can get the help they need to create community and family stability."

To learn more about Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS), please visit www.mvlslaw.org.

About Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS)

Founded in 1981 with a mission to provide access to justice for all, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) serves Maryland's low-income residents by offering legal counseling and full representation for civil cases. MVLS matches clients with volunteer lawyers who represent them in a wide range of consumer, family and workforce re-entry situations, including foreclosure, bankruptcy, income tax disputes, landlord/tenant disputes, wills, estate planning, criminal record expungement, divorce/custody and deed changes. For more information about MVLS' services, visit www.mvlslaw.org.

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