

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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D.C. Senior Freed from Guardianship in Favor of Supported Decision-Making

Washington, D.C. – For the first time in the District of Columbia, a guardianship of an older adult has been terminated in favor of Supported Decision-Making.

Sarah Miller,* a woman in her 80s, was placed under guardianship in 2015 because she had fallen behind on her rent and faced eviction. The landlord offered to work out a payment plan *only if* Ms. Miller had a court-appointed guardian. Faced with the difficult choice of losing either her home or her decision-making rights, Ms. Miller consented to guardianship. However, Ms. Miller is an independent person with a robust network of family members, friends, and professionals to help her, and she shortly realized that guardianship was more restrictive than she had thought it would be. She wanted to enroll in a local program that helps older adults with memory loss manage their finances and pay bills, but was unable to do so because of the guardianship. Ms. Miller wanted to regain the right to legally make her own decisions, just like every other citizen.

Ms. Miller came to Quality Trust's Jenny Hatch Justice Project ("JHJP") for help. This project is funded by the D.C. Bar Foundation to assist low-income District residents with disabilities facing overbroad or undue guardianship. Working with JHJP Staff Attorney Jessica Bronson, Ms. Miller presented the judge with evidence of her history of making decisions and directing her own life using Supported Decision-Making. When people use Supported Decision-Making, they work with friends, family members, and others they trust to help them understand the situations they face, so they can make their own decisions without the need for a guardian. Ms. Miller also presented a case reviewer report and capacity assessment that supported terminating the guardianship. After reviewing this material and hearing from Ms. Miller, the Court agreed and restored Ms. Miller's rights by ending the guardianship.

Ms. Miller is elated by the decision. "Thanks to Ms. Bronson and Quality Trust, I have my legal rights back," she says. "I am now working with them on an Advance Directive and Durable Power of Attorney, so that I can plan for my future and avoid ending up in court again."

"Quality Trust is committed to defending the right of District residents with disabilities to make their own decisions, receive the support they want and need, and direct their own lives," says Tina M. Campanella, Chief Executive of Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities. "We are honored to work with people like [Ms. Miller] and are so pleased with the outcome of her case. Her story is a perfect example of how Supported Decision-Making can also work for older adults – getting them the help they need while preserving their decision-making rights."

For more information on Supported Decision-Making, please visit:

www.DCQualityTrust.org
www.JennyHatchJusticeProject.org
www.SupportedDecision-Making.org

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