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CONTACT: D'Anelle Desire

Director of Communications

Tennessee Justice Center

ddesire@tnjustice.org

Tennessee Physicians Sue to Block State Rule Targeting Immigrant Children with Severe Disabilities

Nashville, TN, June 24, 2026 – Today, the Tennessee Justice Center filed a lawsuit on behalf of three Nashville physicians seeking to block a new state action that would require the reporting of certain immigrant children with severe disabilities to immigration enforcement officials.

Approximately 400 immigrant children across Tennessee receive medical care through Children's Special Services (CSS), a federally funded program that helps medically fragile children with serious and other health conditions who have no other access to care, regardless of immigration status.

"For decades, Children's Special Services has served as a lifeline for children with severe disabilities and chronic illnesses who have nowhere else to turn for care. This action threatens to disrupt care for some of Tennessee's most medically vulnerable children," said Michele Johnson, Executive Director of the Tennessee Justice Center.

Beginning July 1, the Tennessee Department of Health plans to implement the action, requiring the reporting of children who continue receiving CSS services and are suspected of lacking lawful immigration status.

The physicians' patients rely on CSS for treatment and support related to life-threatening conditions, including congenital heart disease, leukemia, and severe seizure disorders. According to the lawsuit, losing access to the program would place these children at immediate risk.

The lawsuit argues that the reporting requirement violates state and federal law. The physicians are asking the Davidson County Chancery Court to temporarily prevent state health officials from sharing children's information with immigration enforcement authorities while the court considers the case.

In court filings, the physicians warn that the specialized care their patients require would be unavailable without CSS and that even brief interruptions in treatment could cause serious harm or, in some cases, prove fatal.

"When doctors are warning that even brief interruptions in treatment could be harmful or even deadly, we believe the state has a responsibility to protect these children rather than place them at greater risk," said Johnson.

The request for a temporary restraining order is currently under advisement by the Chancery Court.

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For over 30 years, the Tennessee Justice Center has been standing with vulnerable Tennessee families and helping them access basic necessities of life. Since opening our doors in 1996, TJC has used lawsuits, legislation and coalition building to overcome injustice, winning \$2 billion in health care and hundreds of millions in financial and nutrition assistance for Tennesseans. Aside from lawsuits, TJC helps assist seniors and other individuals with TennCare, SNAP and other public benefit programs.