
Press Releases



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Boca Raton Partner Laura Maher Defends Children's Rights in Pro Bono Appeal

When a parent's rights are terminated due to abuse, the case doesn't always end there. Parents have the right to appeal—a final effort to regain custody. For the children caught in the middle, those appeals can mean prolonged uncertainty about their future.

That was the situation in a recent case involving siblings who had been removed from their home, where Boca Raton partner Laura Maher stepped in on a pro bono basis to represent the guardian ad litem (GAL)—the entity tasked with advocating solely for the children's best interests. The appeal was brought by the parent, who challenged the trial court's finding of grounds for termination of parental rights under Florida Statutes.

Maher's role was to ensure that the GAL's recommendation—that the children's best interests required terminating parental rights—was properly upheld. She reviewed the record and transcript closely, confirmed that the lower court had followed all procedural requirements, and argued that the trial court's ruling should stand.

At stake was more than procedure; it was the siblings' chance at stability and safety. After careful review, the appellate court agreed, affirming the termination of parental rights and preserving the GAL's determination that the children needed a secure, healthier foundation for the future.

"This is meaningful work because the focus is all on what's best for the kids and what they deserve," Maher explained. "If we are successful, they can continue forming bonds with their current caretakers in a stable home environment and have a path forward."

The case represented a departure from Maher's day-to-day corporate and real estate practice but a return to her roots in child welfare law. Early in her career, before law school, she interned with the Florida Department of Children and Families as a paralegal, an experience that left a lasting impression. Taking on this appeal gave her the opportunity to reconnect with that work and, as she put it, made her "feel connected to something bigger."

It also gave her the chance to stretch different legal muscles. "I got to sharpen the toolbox—going back and using those case law research skills, things you rarely get to do in transactions," she noted. "It was very rewarding; it's an important role to get children set on a path that's more structured and healthier for them."

Maher wasn't alone in her efforts. Colleagues in the Boca Raton office—including Rebecca Rodriguez, Lisa Kochlany, Jenny Sica, and Vikki Ho Shing—lent templates, editing, and administrative support to help secure the win.

"Were it not for the resources that Nelson Mullins provides for pro bono, I don't know that I would have had capacity to take this matter on," Maher said. "I'm grateful to be at a firm that supports cases like this one."

For the children involved, the outcome means stability and the possibility of a healthier future. For Maher, the case was a return to where her career began, and a reminder that even outside her daily practice, a lawyer's skills can be a powerful tool for protecting children's welfare.

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