ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB

PROJECT

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Using Automated Advocates to Provide Access to Justice at Scale

A new class of technology tools to fill a gap in the civil court system

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States faces a crisis in its civil courts, where more than 80 percent of low-income households lack adequate legal representation. A promising new class of technology tools ("Automated Advocates") can help close that gap, but regulatory complexity about who may practice law makes it difficult for companies to build these tools and for regulators to distinguish good actors from bad. This project paves the way for the development of Automated Advocates by coalescing the field around a common definition and set of principles. It also recommends that regulators include and incentivize Automated Advocates in any state and national regulatory sandboxes.

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THE PROBLEM

The right to counsel in America is restricted to criminal courts, leaving millions without access to affordable legal representation for urgent civil issues such as housing, custody, and benefits. A new class of technology tools called Automated Advocates can scale access-to-justice efforts by enabling users to understand and meet the requirements of the court system in an automated way. Yet these technologies face a number of challenges, including regulatory uncertainty, limited funding, and a lack of established norms.

> *Automated Advocates amplify service providers: a thoughtfully designed technology tool can provide one-to-one guidance to clients while simultaneously advocating on behalf of millions.*

THE SOLUTION

This project seeks to expand access to justice in civil courts by giving policymakers the tools to encourage the responsible development of Automated Advocates. Automated Advocates amplify service providers: a thoughtfully-designed technology tool can provide 1:1 guidance to clients while simultaneously advocating on behalf of millions. This project recommends explicitly including Automated Advocates in state-level access-to-justice regulatory sandboxes (or schemes that provide testing grounds for new business models that are not necessarily protected by existing regulations). It further recommends that policymakers use a common set of design standards to separate good actors from bad, and creates a collaborative "call for startups" to incent new Automated Advocates into the market.

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ABOUT THE HUB

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub is a Bay Area policy incubator, training a new generation of tech policy entrepreneurs. We take tech experts, teach them the policy process, and support them in creating outside-the-box solutions to society's problems.

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