

KEITH A. BAYNES  
CIRCUIT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
CHAIR  
(410) 996-5317



JOHN P. MORRISSEY  
CHIEF JUDGE, DISTRICT  
COURT OF MARYLAND  
(410) 260-1522

FAYE D. GASKIN  
CONFERENCE SECRETARY  
(410) 260-1257

Joint Meeting of the  
Conference of Circuit Judges  
and  
District Court Chief Judge's  
Committee

ROBERTA WARNKEN  
CHIEF CLERK  
DISTRICT COURT  
(410) 260-1235

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE  
CONFERENCE OF CIRCUIT JUDGES AND  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGES

A joint meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and the District Administrative Judges was held Monday, September 20, 2021, via Zoom for Government, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

**Members Present**

Hon. Keith A. Baynes, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges  
Hon. John P. Morrissey, Chief Judge, District Court

Hon. Sheila R. Tillerson Adams  
Hon. Pamela J. Brown  
Hon. James Bonifant  
Hon. Audrey J.S. Carrion  
Hon. Christy Holt Chesser  
Hon. L. Robert Cooper  
Hon. Angela Eaves  
Hon. Rand L. Gelber  
Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty  
Hon. James Green  
Hon. Susan H. Hazlett  
Hon. Fred Hecker  
Hon. Ruth Ann Jakubowski  
Hon. Lisa Hall Johnson  
Hon. Stephen H. Kehoe  
Hon. Sherri Koch  
Hon. Donine Carrington Martin

Hon. John McKenna  
Hon. William C. Mulford  
Hon. Viki M. Pauler  
Hon. H. Jack Price, Jr.  
Hon. Gerald V. Purnell  
Hon. S. James Sarbanes  
Hon. Eric W. Schaffer  
Hon. Bonnie G. Schneider  
Hon. Brian D. Shockley  
Hon. Katina Steuart  
Hon. Halee Weinstein  
Hon. Barry G. Williams  
Hon. Dorothy J. Wilson  
Marina Fevola  
Hon. Katherine Hager  
Pamela Harris

**Also, Present Were:**

Hon. Erin M. Danz	Lou Gieszl
Hon. Eileen A. Reilly	Jeff Huddleston
Hon. Richard Sandy	Melinda Jensen
Faye Gaskin	Kelley O'Connor
Renee Abbott	Eliana Pangelinan
Richard Abbott	Suzanne Pelz
Amy Bosley	Bradley Powers
Michael Brady	Lonni Summers
Carole Burkhart	Jason Thomas
Jamie Walter	Kevin Cox, OAG
Roberta Warnken	Michele McDonald, OAG
Sean Wolcott	Clifford Mitchell, MDH
Atif Chaudhry, MDH	Secretary Dennis Schrader, MDH
Sarah Coffey Bowes, Maryland Justice Passport	Webster Ye, MDH

A joint meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and the District Administrative Judges was held Monday, September 20, 2021, via Zoom for Government. The meeting began at 9:00 a.m. Judge Baynes advised everyone that the audio portion of the meeting was being live-streamed pursuant to the Open Meetings Act. Judge Baynes and Chief Judge Morrissey then welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the agenda comprised topics of interest to both trial courts. Judge Baynes welcomed the new members of the Conference, namely Judge James Bonifant and Judge James Sarbanes, both of whom assumed the role of Circuit Administrative Judge for their respective circuits. Chief Judge Morrissey acknowledged the newly appointed judge for the District Court in Washington County, Judge Victoria Lobley.

The minutes of the May 17, 2021, meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges were approved by common consent.

**1. Maryland Justice Passport**

Sarah Bowes, Executive Director of Civil Justice, Inc., gave a presentation on Maryland Justice Passport, a digital portfolio designed to assist self-represented litigants to better navigate the court system and legal services. It can be used to track applications for services, store documents, and keep all the user's information organized. Ms. Bowes noted that there are 40 legal services organizations that are a part of Maryland Justice Passport. She noted, however, that there is not a coordinated process, so each has to be contacted individually. Maryland Justice Passport launched in March 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic slowed its progress. To date,

approximately 350 passports have been established and the momentum has been increasing as the court help centers get engaged.

Ms. Bowes remarked that people generally are under a lot of stress when involved in the justice system and may not absorb all the information provided during consultations with the various court help centers. Additionally, there can be a significant amount of trauma with having to repeatedly retell their story. Maryland Justice Passport provides a digital facility to house and organize the massive amounts of paperwork, thus helping to alleviate some of those concerns. Ms. Bowes described some of the features of the dashboard, which includes options for storing files; tracking events; noting tasks; uploading documents, files, and photographs; and organizing notes. With respect to the tasks that can be stored, the litigant can manipulate the number of days to be notified in advance of a scheduled event or appointment. Litigants can share their information, which is helpful when dealing with various organizations. Ms. Bowes added that one of the most helpful things a provider can receive is a summary of the case which is possible with Maryland Justice Passport. Her goal is to work with the court help centers to ensure they capture the information from litigants seeking assistance.

Chief Judge Morrissey thanked Ms. Bowes for her presentation and expressed his appreciation for her efforts. He remarked that part of the larger goal for court help centers is to enlist *pro bono* attorneys to volunteer so that the centers can refer calls to them to assist.

## **2. Security Update**

Michael Brady, Deputy Director of Engineering and Central Services for the District Court and Sean Wolcott, Chief of Security Administration for the Administrative Office of the Courts, provided an overview of the work being done by their respective offices. Mr. Brady noted that bailiffs provide security for the courtrooms and the courthouse entrances for the District Court. For Fiscal Years 2017, 2018, and 2019, bailiffs screened an average of 3.5 million visitors each year. During that same period, a variety of contraband was seized, including knives (a yearly average of 7,364); OC spray (a yearly average of 1,595); firearms (a yearly average of 333); and other contraband such as scissors, syringes, wine bottle openers (a yearly average of 5,366). During Fiscal Year 2020, amid the pandemic, 1.4 million visitors were screened, and 6,410 contraband seized. Mr. Brady discussed the jurisdiction of the District Court bailiffs, noting that it is defined by the administrative judge. Bailiffs have police powers in District Court locations except where they are co-located with the circuit court; in those instances, they have police powers only in District Court spaces. The other space within those locations is under the purview of the Sheriff. Mr. Brady stated that bailiffs receive 80 hours of initial training for the special police commission; thereafter, they are required to do 12 hours of in-service training each year. The training is approved by the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission.

Mr. Wolcuff stated that his office has a working relationship with the Sheriff's Office in each circuit court and coordinates with the respective office whenever necessary and to ensure his office is meeting the COMAR mandate for training of the Special Police Officers (SPO) for their commission. He added that the training mandates are relatively new for SPOs. Mr. Wolcuff discussed the home security surveys for judges are conducted by the SPOs who assess locking systems, lighting, alarms, etc. At the conclusion of the assessment, the SPO provides suggestions for improvement. The goal is to ensure similar safety and security measures for their homes that are in place in the courthouse. Mr. Wolcuff then discussed efforts underway to protect the personal information of judges, magistrates, and commissioners. The Administrative Office of the Courts entered into a contract in December 2020 with a company to minimize the internet footprint of those who choose to participate. The service, which regularly scans the internet to search for information, is available at no cost to judges, magistrates, and commissioners. It is available at a reduced rate for members of their households. So far, 263 individuals have signed up to participate. As part of the onboarding process for new circuit court judges, Mr. Wolcuff's staff conducts a Google search to demonstrate to the judge designates the amount of information that is on the internet about them. The appropriate law enforcement departments are contacted if a safety or security threat is perceived for those individuals who sign up for the service. A communication will be sent reminding all those eligible about the program.

Chief Judge Morrissey noted that legislation was introduced that would have had an enforcement mechanism if information was posted on websites about judges, magistrates, or commissioners and the information was not removed upon request. The legislation did not pass, but there will be another effort to move the legislation forward.

### **3. Legislative Update**

Chief Judge Morrissey provided an overview of the 2021 legislative session, highlighting several bills.

*HB 885/SB 666 – Courts of Appeals and Special Appeals – Renaming.* This legislation seeks to rename the Court of Appeals as the Supreme Court of Maryland and the Court of Special Appeals as the Appellate Court of Maryland. In addition, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals would be renamed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland. This change requires a constitutional amendment and will be on the ballot during the November 2022 general election.

*HB 186/SB 7 – Courts – Court Dog Program – Veterans Treatment Courts.* This legislation renames the Court Dog and Child Witness Program to the Court Dog Program and expands the program, which is voluntary, to any trial court that has a Veterans Treatment Court Program.

SB 109 – *Secretary of State – Address Confidentiality Programs – Merger of Programs and Expanded Participant Eligibility*. This legislation combines the address confidentiality programs for victims of domestic violence and for victims of human trafficking into one program. It also expands eligibility to survivors of threatened, attempted, or actual domestic violence; sexual assault; stalking; harassment; or human trafficking and to individuals who reside in the same household as someone who is eligible to participate.

HB 18 – *Landlord and Tenant – Residential Rights – Access to Counsel*. This legislation establishes access to legal representation for individuals who meet certain qualifications in specified landlord and tenant proceedings. There is no funding attached to the legislation. This legislation also requires landlords to provide written notice to tenants of their intent to file prior to filing a complaint in the District Court to recover possession of the residential premises if the tenant does not cure within 10 days of the notice being provided. The Notice of Intent to File a Complaint for Summary Ejectment has been created and is posted on the Judiciary’s website pursuant to the legislation.

Chief Judge Morrissey noted that he worked with the Secretary of Housing on ways to assist with distribution of the \$800 million Maryland received from the federal government for rental assistance. He stated that landlords can file on behalf of tenants who want to participate. The funds can be used to assist with back rent, as well as future rent. Individuals are referred to the court help centers to get assistance with completing the forms.

HB 180 – *Juveniles – Sexting*. This legislation establishes procedures for juveniles who commit certain offenses involving or arising out of sexting, including authorizing the court to order a child to participate in an educational program on the risks and consequences of sexting and establishing that a child who violates the Obscene Matter provision of Title 17 of the Criminal Law Article is not subject to sex offender registration, to name a few.

HB 744 – *Counsel Appearance Fees – Domestic Violence*. This legislation prohibits appearance fees for counsel in domestic violence cases in the circuit court.

SB 494 – *Juveniles Convicted as Adults – Sentencing – Limitations and Reduction (Juvenile Restoration Act)*. This legislation authorizes a court to sentence a minor convicted as an adult to less than the minimum term required under law. Additionally, this legislation prohibits a court from sentencing a juvenile to a term of life without the possibility of parole. The legislation also authorizes an individual who was convicted as an adult for an offense when the individual was a minor to file a motion with the court to

reduce the duration of the sentence under certain circumstances.

HB 1339 – *Child Support – Guidelines*. This legislation delays the effective date of the revised child support guidelines until July 2022.

HB 39/SB 581 – *Action for Change of Name – Waiver of Publication Requirement*. This legislation requires a court to waive the publication requirement set forth in the Rule regarding change of name, on motion by the individual.

HB 289 – *Peace Orders – Workplace Violence*. This legislation authorizes an employer to file a petition for a peace order that alleges certain acts against the petitioner’s employee at the employee’s workplace. It requires the employer to notify the employee before filing a petition and extends most statutory provisions related to filing, issuance, and modification of peace orders, as well as shielding of court records. This legislation also contains provisions related to the employer’s immunity from liability.

HB 118 – *Vehicle Laws – Injury or Death of Vulnerable Individual – Penalties*. This legislation prohibits an individual from causing the serious physical injury or death of a vulnerable individual as a result of the individual operating a motor vehicle in violation of any rule of the road specified in the Maryland Vehicle Law. A vulnerable individual could be anyone walking on the street. The legislation provides for the sanctions for violating the law.

HB 115/SB 20 – *Vehicle Laws – Canceled, Revoked, and Suspended Driver’s Licenses – Penalties*. This legislation eliminates the possibility of incarceration for displaying a driver’s license that has been canceled, revoked, or suspended. It also reduces the points assessed from 12 to three.

SB 669/SB 670 – *Constitutional Amendments – Amount in Controversy – Civil Jury Trials*. One bill proposes a constitutional amendment that increases the amount in controversy, from \$15,000 to \$25,000, in civil proceedings before there is a right to a jury trial. The other bill makes the statutory changes necessary to implement the constitutional amendment.

HB 670 – *Police Discipline and Law Enforcement Programs and Procedures*. This legislation makes changes related to law enforcement and increases the limits on civil liability for claims subject to the Maryland Tort Claims Act and the Local Government Tort Claims Act. The legislation also repeals the Law Enforcement Bill of Rights and establishes provisions that relate to a statewide accountability and discipline process for police officers; alters training requirements for the Maryland Police Training and

Standards Commission regarding training and certification; establishes higher education financial assistance programs; outlines police accountability boards in each county; and requires each law enforcement agency to establish a trial board process.

SB 71 – *Body-Worn Cameras, Employee Programs, and Use of Force*. This legislation requires certain law enforcement agencies to require their officers who regularly interact with the public to use body-worn cameras. It also establishes use of force standards.

Chief Judge Morrissey stressed the importance of updating business processes and the courts discussing how the evidence from body-worn cameras is presented in court. He encouraged all judges to review the legislation.

SB 178 – *Search Warrants and Inspection of Records Relating to Police Misconduct*. This legislation establishes provisions for approval of no-knock warrants, limits the grounds for issuance of no-knock warrants and the hours they can be executed, reduces the time between issuance and execution of no-knock warrants, and establishes that the scope of administrative or criminal investigation of misconduct records are personnel records for purposes of the Public Information Act.

SB 201 – *Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records*. This legislation provides for the expungement of crimes or civil offenses under § 5-601 (c)(2)(ii) of the Criminal Law Article, three years after disposition of the charge if no charge in the case resulted in a disposition other than acquittal, dismissal, not guilty, or nolle prosequi. It requires the court to notify the defendant of the right to expungement. The notice to the defendant must include a written form for general waiver.

Chief Judge Morrissey noted that the individual does not have to wait the three years but can petition the court under the normal expungement process.

SB 114 – *Expungement of Conviction and Subsequent Offender Penalties*. This legislation authorizes a person to petition the court for expungement of certain motor vehicle offenses, namely driving on a canceled, suspended, refused, or revoked license/privilege. It also establishes that the subsequent offender penalty only applies if the individual commits a violation of § 16-303 of the Transportation Article within three years of a prior conviction.

HB 240/SB 187 – *Criminal Procedure – Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis, Searching, Regulation, and Oversight*. This legislation establishes requirements and procedures for forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis and related searches of publicly accessible databases using genetic profiles. It also includes provisions regarding

regulation and oversight of testing connected to the analysis.

*HB 366/SB 862 – District Court Commissioners – Arrest Warrants – Recall and Issuance of a Summons.* This legislation authorizes a District or Circuit Court judge, on a finding of good cause, to recall an arrest warrant issued by a commissioner and issue a summons in its place.

*HB 277/SB 505 – Criminal Law – First-Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Conduct.* This legislation establishes that it is a violation of the prohibition on first-degree child abuse to engage in a continuing course of conduct that includes three or more acts of second-degree child abuse.

*HB 316 – Conditions of Pretrial Release – Home Detention Monitoring.* This legislation prohibits a defendant who has been deemed eligible for Public Defender representation to be charged for private pretrial home detention monitoring. The State is required to cover the monitoring costs. Additionally, this legislation establishes the Workgroup on Home Detention Monitoring. The legislation remains effective until one year after the end of the Governor's proclamation of the COVID-19 Catastrophic Health Emergency/State of Emergency.

Chief Judge Morrissey noted that while the legislation does not indicate that the Judiciary would have any responsibility, the Judiciary was informed that it would be responsible for implementing the legislation and establishing procedures to ensure the licensed home detention monitoring companies are compensated from the \$5 million allocated for this purpose. A business process has been established and coordinators identified in each court location. There are approximately 1,300 individuals on private pretrial home detention monitoring per day; many of those individuals are in Baltimore City.

*HB 1072/SB 750 – Charles County – Community Service and Pretrial Release Programs.* This legislation authorizes the Charles County Board of Commissioners to establish a community service program and a pretrial release program in the county. The court may order individuals to participate in those programs.

*HB 234/SB 607 – Criminal Law – Harm to Service Animals.* This legislation prohibits individuals from willfully and maliciously killing, injuring, or interfering with the use of a service animal.

*HB 477 – Court Order to use a Cell Site Simulator or Obtain Location Information from an Electronic Device – Procedures.* This legislation sets forth the procedures for submitting applications for a court order to intercept communications and for how the

court issues the order. The legislation specifies that the above may be accomplished in person, by secure fax, or by secure electronic mail.

Chief Judge Morrissey commented on two bills that were vetoed, namely HB 23/SB 234 – *Personal Information – State and Local Agencies – Restrictions on Access* and SB 420 – *Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization*.

#### **4. Maryland Department of Health Update**

Secretary Dennis Schrader and Webster Ye, Maryland Department of Health, provided an update on the Department's activities. Secretary Schrader remarked about the ongoing communication between himself, Chief Judge Morrissey, and Judge Baynes as the Chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges. That collaboration allows them to set high-level priorities and provide appropriate staff oversight. He stated that the pandemic is far from over, so one of his top goals is to ensure that Maryland is fully vaccinated. Secretary Schrader noted that the Department provided supplemental doses of the vaccines for the immune-compromised, adding that vaccine providers cannot turn anyone away who wants to get the supplemental dose. He thanked the Prince George's County and Baltimore City courts for serving as community vaccination sites, noting that it was a great partnership. He encouraged any other courts that are interested in hosting a community vaccination clinic to reach out to him. Secretary Schrader applauded former Chief Judge Barbera for the administrative order regarding vaccination and emphasized the importance of keeping the Judiciary open. He stated that the Department is working closely with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to keep the system flowing efficiently, acknowledging that it is complicated and requires a coordinated effort. Mr. Ye worked to provide medical supplies to the Judiciary and stands at the ready to provide other supplies, including rapid tests.

The Department released its facilities master plan which will help to transform health care delivery and improve the quality of care, as well as reduce costs. There are three phases to the plan that will be implemented between 2022 and 2041. The milestones within phases include, but are not limited to, constructing four 24-hour regional crisis centers, performing an assessment of the current Central Maryland inpatient behavioral health capacity, and developing strategic partnerships to transition services currently provided at the Potomac Center and Spring Grove Hospital Center to healthcare and community providers.

It was noted that the psychiatric hospitals affected by the pandemic had to pause admissions. Some of the community health providers have lost staff and the Department is working with the hospitals to manage patient admissions. Mr. Ye stated that they are sustaining people longer with an approximate cycle time of 22 days. There currently are 54 patients on the

wait list. The Department continues to work to ensure that patients deemed incompetent to stand trial receive the treatment they need.

Judge Carrion thanked Secretary Schrader for the Department's partnership with the mobile unit and asked if booster shots would be available in the same manner. Secretary Schrader stated that the Department is developing a plan to administer the booster shot and that the FDA has given the green light to proceed. He is hopeful that the CDC will give blanket authorization for individuals 65 years of age and older. Currently, authorization has been given only for the immune-compromised and only for the Pfizer vaccine. Secretary Schrader added that within the next six to eight weeks, as they get the authorization, the booster shot will be promoted. The initial focus will be congregant settings, including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and group homes for developmentally disabled individuals.

Secretary Schrader remarked that approximately 60 percent of the individuals transported to court have been vaccinated, adding that they cannot be forced to be vaccinated. He will research whether individuals who are transported to court are required to be tested. The mandate regarding staff is that they be vaccinated or submit to testing. It is expected that the pressure for people to get vaccinated will increase, but one issue has been emergency use vaccinations.

Chief Judge Morrissey thanked Secretary Schrader for the partnership over the last several years, adding that he is looking forward to working together in the future.

## **5. Judicial Information Systems Update**

Jeff Huddleston, Renee Abbott, and Jason Thomas provided an update on the work of the Judicial Information Systems (JIS) division, beginning the presentation with an overview of its structure and the broad areas of responsibility which include applications, data, administration, security, customer service, and infrastructure. The following projects were highlighted:

- MDEC – Montgomery County is scheduled to go live in October, which leaves Prince George's County and Baltimore City before the entire state is on MDEC,
- ODR – This is an on-line dispute resolution initiative. The plan is to focus on traffic initially and then expand to other casetypes,
- Court Revenue – The existing cash register system is aging, so JIS is taking this opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of all systems/programs related to the capture of court revenue,
- All Things Remote – As more and more functions are handled remotely, JIS continues to explore ways to improve,
- VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) – This represents a different way of delivering telephone communications. The plan is to pilot VOIP in the Annapolis Complex and conduct an evaluation before rolling it out to other parts of the Judiciary,

- Redaction – There is an ongoing effort to explore various redaction software offerings and the efficacy of each in a legal setting,
- Data Analytics – An effort is underway to implement a data analytics system to manage data from an analytics perspective for internal and external use, and
- ADR – JIS is evaluating systems to manage ADR.

The JIS Technical Roadmap was discussed, which encompasses a three-year path to modernization, from 2021 through 2024. Among the milestones charted for that time period are deployment of the modern application platform, migration of applications to Linux, implementation of zero trust security, full migration of applications to the modern application platform, implementation of platforms to allow the movement of workloads between on premise datacenters and cloud datacenters and decommission of the last legacy platform and the secondary datacenter. The above are critical to effectively supporting the infrastructure for the Judiciary’s critical applications and services.

Chief Judge Morrissey expressed appreciation for all that JIS does to ensure the Judiciary’s network and infrastructure are operational, up-to-date, and secure.

## **6. Maryland Court Help Centers Updates**

Lonni Summers, Richard Abbott, and Kelly Franks provided an update on the Maryland’s court help centers. The Maryland Court Help Center provides remote services in all civil matters, regardless of income, through the telephone, live chat, and email after hours. The Maryland Court Help Center is operational weekdays from 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. In addition to the Maryland Court Help Center, there are nine District Court Help Centers and a family court help center in each of the circuit courts. The court help centers provide legal services free of charge. The Judiciary recently rebranded “self-help” to bring everything under one umbrella – Maryland Court Help, creating new marketing material that was made available to court staff and court-related entities. The material, which can be on the Access to Justice department’s webpage, is available in several languages, including Spanish, French, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Amharic, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese. In addition, a Best Practices Guide also was published as a roadmap for courts with court help centers. Some of the topics included in the guide are staff qualifications, ethics, data collection and reporting, and accessibility.

The court help centers provided more than 145,000 instances of service in Fiscal Year 2021, which was 5,000 more than before the pandemic. More than 90 self-help videos have been created on various topics to assist court users. The most recent initiative has been focused on creating 7 parenting plan videos. The videos are only about three minutes in length to keep them interesting while still providing the needed information. Another source of assistance is the Maryland court help app which has links to a plethora of resources.

The District Court Help Centers are located in Baltimore City, Cambridge, Catonsville, Frederick, Glen Burnie, Hagerstown, Rockville, Salisbury, and Upper Marlboro. A center is planned for Charles County next year. They are operational Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and provide assistance in District Court matters, including landlord and tenant, small and large civil, consumer issues such as debt collection, return of property, domestic violence, peace order, and expungement. The centers were closed for nearly half of Fiscal Year 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but still provided more than 8,000 instances of service, most of which were in Baltimore City for landlord and tenant matters. Approximately 77 percent of the District Court help center users reported an annual household income of less than \$50,000, which highlights the need to provide access to quality free legal assistance to ensure access to justice for all.

The family court help centers provide services during courthouse hours, with eight centers also offering assistance during the evening hours – Baltimore, Caroline, Carroll, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Queen Anne’s, and Talbot counties. Funding for the centers is provided through the jurisdictional grants managed by the Administrative Office of the Courts’ Department of Juvenile and Family Services. Service generally is provided on a first come-first served basis, but at the onset of the pandemic, the service model pivoted to appointments with assistance provided through Zoom for Government. While staff assist with family law processes, answer questions, help with court forms, and help users to move their cases along, they cannot represent the users in court, file the paperwork, or assist the user if he or she has an attorney. The centers have been challenged throughout the pandemic and in-person assistance had to cease for some time, but the remote services center assisted with more than 85,000 telephone calls, in excess of 13,000 live chat exchanges, and over 1,000 emails. The remote services center reported an influx of family law inquiries, accounting for nearly 50 percent of all requests. Overwhelmingly, the users reported low household income with most not being able to afford private legal counsel.

Judge Baynes and Chief Judge Morrissey both expressed their appreciation for all the good work that is being done in this area and for how effectively the programs are managed.

## **7. Judgeship Certification Interim Update**

Jamie Walter and Brad Powers provided an update on judgeship certification, noting that the current weighted caseload model was developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in 2017. Using a weighted caseload model is regarded as a nationwide best practice for determining resource need. The NCSC recommends fully updating the model every 10 years because of changes in rules, legislation, and business processes that may impact the case weights. In addition, the NCSC recommends an interim update every five years. The Judiciary

has contracted with the NCSC to assist with the interim update. Judges from both trial courts are needed to serve on the advisory committee for this initiative.

The study that was completed in 2017 had three key project milestones – sufficiency of time survey, time study and time study analysis, and quality adjustment session. The time study and time study analysis will not be included in the interim update; however, the sufficiency of time survey will be sent to all trial judges asking questions about whether they think they have enough time to complete various tasks. The results of the survey will be presented to the focus group and, where deemed appropriate, adjustments will be made to the case weights and the model updated.

Ms. Walter noted that three District Court and three circuit court judges are needed to serve on the advisory committee. She stated that most of the work will occur between October 2021 and January 2022. Additional judges will be needed for the focus groups. While judges familiar with all case types are needed to provide perspective on how things have changed since the last study, Ms. Walter encouraged judges with experience in criminal cases, including pre- and post-disposition activity, to participate as it is anticipated that changes in those areas since 2017 will have the most impact to the model. Those judges interested in serving on the advisory committee or participating in the focus groups should contact Ms. Walter at [Jamie.walter@mdcourts.gov](mailto:Jamie.walter@mdcourts.gov).

## **8. New JIS Headquarters Building**

Melinda Jensen discussed the new JIS headquarters building that currently is under construction. The building is adjacent to the Maryland Judicial Center and will bring all JIS staff, who currently are housed in four different locations, together in one location. The building will have four stories, the first two will be for parking and the top two levels will house the offices as well as the data center. It is expected that JIS will take occupancy in March 2023.

## **9. Office of the Attorney General**

Michele McDonald thanked everyone for their tremendous support during her tenure, adding that it has been a privilege and honor to work with the courts and that she is so appreciative of all that the courts do for the citizens. She talked about how her office has changed over the years. She introduced Kevin Cox as the new counsel for the Courts Division, stating that he is an exceptionally talented lawyer. Mr. Cox commented that he is looking forward to continuing to work with the courts. His goal is to provide the level and quality of service to which the courts have grown accustomed. Judge Baynes thanked Ms. McDonald for her service on behalf of the entire Judiciary. Judge Carrion then read a proclamation to Ms. McDonald on behalf of the Conference of Circuit Judges wherein her hard work, dedication, support, and

Conference of Circuit Judges and District Administrative Judges  
Joint Meeting  
September 20, 2021  
Page 14

service were acknowledged. Ms. McDonald expressed her gratitude and remarked that she hopes to continue to do good work in her new position.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Gaskin  
Conference Secretary