



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

John Nevin, Communications Director

Ph: 517-373-0129 Twitter: @MISupremeCourt FB: facebook.com/misupremecourt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supreme Court Announces Commission Charged with Closing the Justice Gap, Improving Court Access for All Michigianians

LANSING, MI, January 26, 2021 - Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack today announced the Court's adoption of [Administrative Order 2021-1](#), which creates a new Justice for All (JFA) Commission that will work toward the goal of 100 percent access to our civil justice system. The Commission will lead the implementation of the JFA Task Force's [Strategic Plan](#) (released in December 2020) aimed at helping more Michigianians solve civil legal problems such as landlord-tenant issues, family law disputes such as parenting time or custody, and access to benefits.

"All Michigan residents must have equal access to our courts and to resources needed to navigate our justice system, regardless of who they are, what they earn, or where they come from," said Chief Justice McCormack. "With dedicated and diverse members, the JFA Commission has the roadmap, commitment, and focus to close the justice gap in Michigan."

The leadership, direction, and administrative support for the Commission activities will be provided collaboratively by the State Court Administrative Office, State Bar of Michigan, and the Michigan State Bar Foundation. The State Court Administrator, and the executive directors of the State Bar of Michigan and the Michigan State Bar Foundation, or their designees, constitute the Executive Team. Justice Zahra will serve as chair, and Angela Tripp, director of [Michigan Legal Help](#), will serve as vice chair.

Justice Zahra said, "I am honored to steer the Commission and to continue working closely with Angela Tripp, who manages the nation's leading legal self-help program. We are ready to get to work on taking the Justice for All Strategic Plan to the next level and opening the doors of justice wide for our neighbors, our communities, and people statewide."

The Court appointed the following persons to the Justice for All Commission:

For terms ending December 31, 2023:

- SBM Executive Director Janet Welch (or designee)
- State Court Administrator Thomas Boyd (or designee)
- Supreme Court Justice Brian K. Zahra
- Michigan State Bar Foundation Executive Director Jennifer Bentley
- Michigan Legal Help Director Angela Tripp
- Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Director Loren Khogali
- Hon. Timothy Kelly (on behalf of the Michigan District Judges Association)
- Hon. Margaret Zuzich Bakker (on behalf of the Michigan Judges Association)
- Hon. Mabel Mayfield (on behalf of the Michigan Probate Judges Association)
- Hon. Allie Maldonado (on behalf of Michigan Tribal Courts)

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For terms ending December 31, 2022:

- Rep. TC Clements (designated by the Speaker of the House)
- A state senator designated by the Senate Majority Leader (To be determined)
- Joshua Rivera (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services)
- Clarence Stone (Michigan State Housing Development Authority)
- Alicia Moon (Executive Office of Governor Gretchen Whitmer)
- Carol Siemon (on behalf of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan)
- Bonsitu Kintaba (on behalf of the State Planning Body)
- Ashley Lowe (on behalf of Legal Services Association of Michigan)
- Yusef Shakur (on behalf of the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion)
- Hon. Cynthia Ward (on behalf of the Association of Black Judges)

For terms ending December 31, 2021:

- Rob Buchanan (President, State Bar of Michigan)
- Kevin Bowling (on behalf of Court Administrators/Probate Registers)
- Michelle Williams (Michigan Department of Education)
- Samantha Ashby (Peter White Public Library in Marquette)
- Lynda Zeller (Michigan Health Care Endowment)
- Deborah Hughes (Kent County Legal Assistance Center)
- Bianca McQueen (Client Board Member, Lakeshore Legal Aid)
- Nicole Huddleston (Detroit Justice Center)
- Elly Jordan (Michigan Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence)
- Brittany Schultz (Ford Motor Company)

Commission member and SBM President Rob Buchanan said, “Since its founding in 1935, the State Bar of Michigan has been committed to serving the public, and there’s no better way to advance our calling than ensuring access to justice for everyone. I am delighted the State Bar is part of this extraordinary initiative. Our courtrooms can be daunting and impeding places, even now in the new age of Zoom access. Nobody should be denied resources or equality he or she needs and deserves for a fair outcome.”

The JFA Task Force’s 2020 [report](#) highlights important desired outcomes that were identified by stakeholders and the steps needed to achieve those outcomes. Recommended steps include:

- Simplify, streamline and create uniform processes to improve the ability to navigate the court system.
- Improve the triage and referral systems through usability testing so that individuals can be connected to the resources they need.
- Provide education for parties on remote access to court resources, expand use of text messaging and other convenient technology, use plain language to explain procedures and processes.
- Test and implement new ways of providing affordable legal services, educate public and stakeholders on available resources.
- Improve technology and access at legal self-help centers and increase public awareness of these tools.

For more information, visit www.courts.mi.gov/justiceforall.