



# MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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## **Michigan's Justice System Reaches 1 Million Hours of Zoom Hearings**

*'Virtual courtrooms' keeping the doors of justice open during pandemic*

LANSING, MI, September 17, 2020 - The Michigan Supreme Court announced today that courts across the state have logged more than 1,000,000 hours of online hearings since proceedings were moved online in late March. In order to keep the doors to Michigan's justice system open, the Court has authorized additional use of remote proceedings, provided training for judges and court staff, and implemented new technology to enhance both security and access. Statewide, nearly 1,000 judges and other courts officers are using Zoom licenses provided by the State Court Administrative Office.

"I believe strongly that the more access the people have to court proceedings, records, and case-related data, the more trust they have in our judicial system and willingness to abide by court orders," said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack, as she testified before the state Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. "Conducting 1,000,000 hours of hearings in less than six months' time is simply remarkable. At the same time, we build trust by making sure those proceedings can be viewed by the public."

To enable public access and transparency, the Supreme Court launched a [Virtual Courtroom Directory](#) that enables the public to click a map to find their court and watch. Courts are required to either live stream proceedings to YouTube live or to post a video of those proceedings immediately after the event. Since its launch in May, the public has used the directory more than 80,000 times and trial court YouTube pages have more than 30,000 subscribers.

Other ways the Supreme Court is ensuring access:

- Offering the nation's first statewide online dispute resolution tool ([MI-Resolve](#)).
- Developing a new application that enables courts to text parties regarding hearing dates and payments owed.
- Protecting secure access to data for our courts by partnering with Microsoft to build a Windows Virtual Desktop environment that allows judges and court staff to securely access case files.
- Providing guidance to courts on every aspect of holding jury trials that protect public health and the rights of parties—from *voir dire* to verdict.
- Improving access for self-represented litigants through [Michigan Legal Help](#) on issues ranging from evictions to unemployment insurance.

For more information about the judicial branch's response to COVID-19, visit [www.courts.mi.gov/COVID19](http://www.courts.mi.gov/COVID19)

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