



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Justice for All Task Force Receives Nearly \$100,000 Grant

Project aims to provide 100 percent access to civil justice system

LANSING, MI, October 30, 2019 – The Michigan Supreme Court today announced that the Justice for All Task Force has received a nearly \$100,000 grant from the national Justice For All project managed by the National Center for State Courts. Led by Justice Brian K. Zahra, the goal of the task force is to reduce the gap between the civil legal needs of Michigan residents and available resources. Civil legal concerns include disputes regarding children and custody, landlord-tenant matters, and many others.

“With this generous national support, Michigan’s Justice for All initiative will be better able to bring together stakeholders to inventory current resources and develop a forward-looking plan that reflects a wide range of input and innovative thinking to reduce the civil justice gap,” said Justice Zahra.

In this phase of the initiative, Michigan, Illinois, and Louisiana received grant funding out of 15 states that applied. A key element of the effort is for states at earlier stages of their planning process to share their successes as well as obstacles encountered with other states. These “lessons learned” will help all states be more successful in reducing the civil justice gap, even though each state will have a different approach. Another important step is helping the public better understand the legal landscape and how to find a lawyer or access legal information. In this regard, Michigan is already a national leader with the self-help resources provided by www.michiganlegalhelp.org.

“The Justice for All Advisory Committee was impressed with how these states are reimagining their access to justice efforts and networks,” noted the Hon. Laurie Zelon, associate justice of the California Court of Appeal and co-chair of the JFA Advisory Committee. “We applaud their staunch commitment to developing a comprehensive solution to the crisis facing our civil justice system and look forward to seeing their proposed plans and collaborations come to life.”

In 2017, the Legal Services Corporation reported on the “justice gap” and identified several key challenges with respect to low-income households. For example, more than seven out of ten low-income households reported at least one civil legal problem in the last year. In nearly nine out of ten legal problems reported, low-income Americans received inadequate or no legal help. In Michigan, more than 20 percent of the population are at or below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Michigan’s Justice for All Task Force follows up on recommendations by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators promoting the Justice for All Project. A key element of the initiative is the recognition that no one program is the answer to achieve 100 percent access, but rather a comprehensive and collaborative approach developed with all stakeholders at the table is needed.

More information about the Task Force: www.courts.mi.gov/justiceforall

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