



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Justice Young Highlights Judicial Accomplishments, Details Budget Priorities**

LANSING, MI, February 28, 2017 – In remarks today to the Michigan Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Judiciary, Justice Robert P. Young, Jr., highlighted efforts to increase efficiency, save taxpayer dollars, and improve service to the public. Justice Young also detailed plans for new performance measures and budget priorities, including efforts to address Michigan’s opioid epidemic with additional treatment options and development of a pretrial risk assessment tool to make sure high-risk offenders are kept behind bars and low-risk offenders can stay working and providing for their families.

“Our strategy has helped to make Michigan’s judiciary a national model of efficiency and service to the public,” said Justice Young. “We have been successful because we have focused on three critical, strategic objectives: measuring performance to improve outcomes; implementing new technology to increase efficiency and improve access; and reengineering courts to streamline operations and save money.”

#### **Public Satisfaction with Courts is High**

Justice Young focused on how courts use data-driven performance measures to improve service to the public. A key tool in this regard is the Public Satisfaction Survey, which is administered to 25,000 court users annually. With 100,000 respondents over the past four years, the Supreme Court has learned:

- 93 percent said they were treated with courtesy and respect;
- 86 percent were able to get their business done in a reasonable amount of time; and
- 82 percent said their case was handled fairly.

He noted that these results have been remarkably consistent over time and across all courts. Most importantly, all trial courts are now accustomed to using these data as a management tool to further improve service to the public.

#### **New Performance Measures Focus on Jury Service, Court Safety**

Justice Young explained that the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) is constantly working with judges and court administrators to implement additional performance measures. Currently, performance measures are being implemented regarding juror utilization so that the public’s time is used efficiently and that basic security standards are in place to ensure both the public and court staff are safe at court facilities.

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In addition, Justice Young described how SCAO has developed standards and best practices manuals for adult drug courts, mental health courts, and veterans treatment courts. This fall, SCAO will begin certifying that problem-solving courts have implemented the standards and best practices that research indicates lead to the best participant outcomes.

### **Medication Assisted Treatment Helps Address Opioid Epidemic**

The Governor's budget makes \$750,000 of one-time funding for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) an ongoing funding source for drug court participants with an opioid disorder. As the nation faces an opioid epidemic, drug courts offer a treatment option that has been proven to work. Only 7 percent of participants in MAT programs reoffended within two years, compared to 16 percent of standard probationers. The ongoing funding will enable SCAO to analyze participant data over several years to provide Michigan-specific outcome information.

### **Technology Increases Efficiency and Improves Access**

Justice Young explained that technology implementation plays a critical role in efforts to increase efficiency and improve access. A key effort in this regard has been a plan to put videoconferencing systems in every courtroom with a judge statewide – a goal that was reached late last year. Since 2010, the Michigan Department of Corrections has saved more than \$18 million through the “virtual” transport of prisoners. Local jurisdictions are estimated to be saving even more. For example, Kalamazoo's 9th Circuit Court estimates savings of nearly \$1 million from 2012 through 2015.

### **Court Rightsizing and Reengineering Saves Money, Increases Safety**

Justice Young reported that the rightsizing of our courts to make sure the number of judges matches the workload has already resulted in the reduction of 26 judgeships. Cumulative savings from 2011 to 2016 are almost \$15 million.

The Governor's budget also includes \$605,700 to develop a pretrial risk assessment process to better identify which offenders should be considered for release on personal recognizance. Such a process could reduce the number of low-risk offenders being held in jail until their hearings because they cannot afford the cost of a monetary bond.

A key benefit of putting data to work in assessing risk is the significant cost savings for local jails. In addition, we can make sure high-risk offenders are kept behind bars, making communities safer. Low- and medium-risk offenders can continue working and supporting their families without costing taxpayers the expense of keeping them in the county jail.

“Ultimately, that's the goal of our judiciary as a whole – continuous improvement,” Justice Young concluded. “We know we can always do a better job serving the public and welcome your ideas to do so.”