

Chief Justice Paula M. Carey
MBA State of the Judiciary
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Good afternoon, I am delighted to be here today with my Partners in Justice, Chief Justice Ralph Gants and Court Administrator Harry Spence and all of you, my Chief Justices and true management team, fellow judges, commissioners, clerks and registers; directors, deputy court administrators, so many other court staff and my friends and colleagues of the bar.

I love my work. I am so fortunate to be able to stand here today as Chief Justice of the Trial Court but more importantly as a member of a proud justice system. I came to the role of Chief Justice of the Trial Court in July of 2013 and continue to be grateful every day for this amazing opportunity to lead such a fine group of individuals who day after day commit themselves to the delivery of justice.

The icing on the cake is that I get to work with two individuals whom I respect greatly for their energy, intellect, experience and passion. For me it is a wonderful opportunity and I am sincerely energized and inspired by the work and the people I work with. There is so much I would like to tell you about but I promise to try to keep within my allotted time and highlight just a few areas.

A year ago I stood before you and told you of the energy, enthusiasm and willingness with which the Trial Court was embracing the changes in our organization with our first ever strategic plan. It is hard to believe that we have now essentially completed Strategic Plan 1.0 and are moving towards the development of Strategic Plan 2.0. The commitment of the organization to this effort despite the incredible amount of work it required is nothing short of amazing. We intend to engage individuals at all levels in our system to help identify future and continuing priorities together. Our hope with Strategic Plan 2.0 is that we will have a larger focus on judicial policy areas such as

disproportionality in outcomes, procedural fairness, access to justice, racial and cultural bias and the use of data to help inform decision making.

We are making great strides developing and strengthening the unified management team that has been created by our legislature. We continue to foster initiative and talent development within the organization through both internal training offered through our Judicial Institute and outside programs such as the Michigan State Judicial Management Certificate Program where we are cultivating our future leaders.

Our increased focus on professionalism is taking hold. A judge recently shared that an experienced Court Officer had rolled his eyeballs when a newly trained CO explained the “ready” stance he was using in court. But she later saw the long term officer in the “ready” position as well. We would like to believe this is a culture change. Standards are higher and people are rising to these standards.

As a society we face unprecedented challenges in the areas of substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health. The challenge of opiate and opioid addiction presents a public health crisis we as a court system cannot ignore. Addiction impacts all our courts, not just those with jurisdiction over criminal and/or mental health cases but those that respond to matters of child welfare, custody, housing and foreclosures.

This is not an issue the courts can face alone. Addressing this complex community challenge takes collaboration and cooperation with many different justice partners in ways we have never partnered before. We are grateful for the collaboration of the Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, and the legislature as we move forward in addressing these public health challenges.

The key to our efforts in addressing substance use and mental health issues for justice involved individuals is Specialty Courts. Thanks to our legislative partners, the Trial Court received \$3 million dollars to fund eight additional Specialty Courts this fiscal year. The vast majority of the funding goes to our executive branch partners at Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health and to the Department of

Veterans Services. Our efforts regarding Specialty Courts are collaborative and coordinated to help justice-involved individuals who suffer from substance use and mental health issues.

By the end of the fiscal year we expect to have 42 sessions up and running statewide. We are strengthening our existing Specialty Courts with increased training for Specialty Court teams, a certification requirement, and now through a partnership with UMASS Medical School we have an established a Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts. The Center of Excellence, has provided us with a new web site, a place for data collection and research to live, as well as a commitment to providing analysis and training in the area of Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts and Veterans' Treatment Courts. We expect that the role of the Center of Excellence will expand in the future to address other substantive areas that intersect with the operation of these specialized sessions.

Parallel to our efforts on Specialty Courts, the Trial Court established a Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues. Members include representatives from the Trial Court, Department of Mental Health, the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, the Department of Corrections, Sheriffs; District Attorneys and defense attorneys. The goal of the Task Force is to identify internal and external resources, so that gaps can be identified and filled.

The Community Resources Subcommittee lead by Register John Merrigan and First Justice Kathy Coffey has taken the initiative to coordinate a process to complete a community based Sequential Intercept Mapping across the Commonwealth.

We know that people move through the criminal justice system in predictable ways. The key is to examine this flow and look for ways to intercept those with mental illness and substance disorders to ensure that they have prompt access to treatment, opportunities for diversion, and linkage to community resources. This effort is a true collaboration that attempts to ensure that all persons, justice involved, or not, receive the treatment they need.

As for other initiatives, extraordinary work has been done by the Trial Court's Domestic Violence Education Task Force chaired by Judge Marianne Hinkle who is working to implement the provisions of the domestic violence legislation passed in 2014 and to fulfill the mandate of the Task Force. The Task Force is developing a plan for comprehensive domestic violence training for all court staff and many external criminal justice partners. We have partnered with the Donahue Institute to produce a series of video modules to train our staff and others.

We are also exploring assessment tools to more effectively identify domestic violence and lethality factors. These assessments help ensure victims are safe and all persons are treated fairly within our system.

We continue to work on many initiatives that focus on access to justice; our newly completed Language Access Plan is just one example. The Plan details the road we need to travel to make meaningful language access available for Limited English Proficient individuals in all court proceedings and court-managed or court-related or mandated programs.

I would like to take my last couple of minutes to talk about the bar. The commitment of the bar to working with the judiciary in Massachusetts is unparalleled. Continued collaboration is essential as we engage in continuous improvement in our system.

At each and every step, and with every challenge the Trial Court faced, the bar has stood beside us and helped in immeasurable ways. Over the last three years our legislative and executive partners have provided us with a budget that enables us to move forward with initiatives we hadn't thought possible, such as Court Service Centers and Specialty Courts, all with your support.

As I attend conferences across the country I am constantly reminded that the broad-based efforts and the collaborative spirit of the Massachusetts Bar are truly unique. For that I

thank you.

Countless lawyers volunteer their time to ensure that individuals obtain the representation and advice they need through Volunteer Lawyer programs, Child Advocacy Programs, Lawyer for the Day and Limited Assistance Representation. The Bar also plays a vital role in challenging us to look at things in different ways and propose initiatives that look to improve our system of justice such as the area of Voir Dire.

I conclude as I began with the acknowledgement that I am blessed to be part of such an incredible justice system. Our work in pursuing justice is noble and worth all of our effort and attention. I thank you for your steadfast commitment and your active partnership.