



Oral presentation.

Good afternoon. My name is George Gialtouridis. I am the owner of New England Risk Solutions LLC, a Massachusetts-based company which provides public records information services through data retrieval. The company contracts certified collectors who document tax lien, small claims and civil case information which in turn is made available to data technology and business information solutions providers. We provide information technology and analytics to a wide range of public and private sector industries to help them predict, assess and manage risk and to prevent fraud, waste and abuse. As public records, Massachusetts court cases are integral to the data which we provide to our customers.

Our trained and certified associates collect civil and small claims case information from all the courthouses throughout Massachusetts as well as state and federal tax lien data from the Registries of Deeds of the Commonwealth.

Timely and accurate reporting of public records information is a vital part of the credit risk management cycle. It provides a number of advantages to the general public and the industries we serve.

On a national level, it aids in the battle against fraud and helps keep credit interest rates low. On the local level it allows businesses and property managers to adequately assess consumer risks before engaging in business. It keeps the community's overall cost of goods and services down by reducing the amount of loss incurred due to bad debt. It also keeps Federal, State and local taxes down because of improved recoveries of governmental debts such as tax liens, court costs and fees.

Prior to the rollout of MassCourts, the intranet platform Civil-BasCOT, or Civil Basic Court Operations Tool, was the case management system used on the public terminals in courthouses throughout the Commonwealth. Complete civil and small claims case information was available on these terminals for our associates to collect, including the names and addresses of the defendants in each case. Ever since Massachusetts courts gradually transitioned to MassCourts, the new platform does not make the defendants' addresses available to view. As a result, in order for us to retrieve complete case information, we must now request from court staff to remove stacks of docket files from storage and then refile them following our review. We are able to do this only during the limited hours of the week we are allowed access to these files and only in the clerks' offices where there is ample space on the counter to place the files for review, along with a laptop each collector uses, all without interfering with the court's normal course of business.

According to the FY2014 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COURT SYSTEM, there were approximately 84,000 civil cases and 103,000 small claims cases filed throughout the Commonwealth, in 2014. That's close to 200,000 combined cases annually.

Electronic access to complete case information for these hundreds of thousands of cases will benefit everyone as we can again be totally independent of the office staff to perform our work, just as we were only a few years back before the MassCourts rollout.

While expressing my concerns in conversations with various Trial Court administration officials during the past few years, I have noticed that a few officials expressed just one reservation, and that is regarding the addresses of persons who have obtained restraining orders in harassment and domestic violence cases and that such information should not be revealed. I totally agree. I am sure that there is software available which can address that issue by simply filtering out such case information.

In regards to federal and state tax lien collection, all of the Commonwealth's Registries of Deeds have scanned images available to the general public to view on their online websites, all with complete information including addresses.

The MassCourts case management platform is supported by the Ohio-based provider Courtview Justice Solutions. The same company supports similar case management systems in a growing number of jurisdictions throughout the country.

Many of these same jurisdictions have complete case information available to the general public on their respective internet portals, including party addresses.

New England Risk Solutions LLC also conducts business activity in other New England states. For instance, last year in Rhode Island a new e-filing paperless system was implemented where scanned images of case documents are now available to view on the public terminals inside the various Rhode Island courts with complete case information.

I am also the owner of New York Risk Solutions LLC, another Massachusetts-based company which provides public records information for 57 out of the 62 New York State counties. In New York, court records are available through the county clerks' offices and each individual county contracts its own case management system provider. All of these counties have complete case information available to the general public through the public terminals in their respective clerks' offices and many of them on their respective internet portals, including scanned images of case documents. Access to some of these online portals is on a subscription basis while access to others is free.

And I would like to close with the May 11th Boston Globe editorial titled *Technology shift should not block access to court records*, as I agree with the following statement in the editorial: "*The advent of new technology for the court records system should promote wider records transparency, not limit it.*" I kindly request that complete case information for civil and small claims cases is made available again to the general public on either the public terminals within the courthouses, just as it was available on BasCot, or on the masscourts.org internet portal.

I would be happy to provide the Committee with any additional information that would assist it in restoring complete electronic access to this public information.

Thank you.

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