

**State of the Judiciary**  
**Trial Court Administrator Jonathan Williams**  
**John Adams Courthouse**  
**October 24, 2018**

Good Afternoon. I am honored to join you for my 2<sup>nd</sup> State of the Judiciary. In a word, I must say it is EXCITING -- there is so much progress taking place on multiple fronts.

I was drawn to the Massachusetts Trial Court as a result of the innovative strategic plans developed by the forward-thinking court leaders here.

To date I have visited more than 50 courthouses: from the North Adams Juvenile Court, to the Edgartown Superior Court, and to the recently renovated and reopened Haverhill District Court. I continue to be impressed by the diligence, commitment to justice, and creativity of the judges, court officials and staff I meet every day. Such a wide range of people and issues come through the doors -- and they are working hard to help people resolve their challenges.

One of my critical roles -- working with Chief Justice Paula Carey -- is to bring a new set of eyes and experiences to the discussion of HOW we can best achieve our expansive vision of justice. Those of you with an interest in management know that modern organizations have made change management part of their DNA.

That's why we must continue to expand our planning capabilities and seek operational excellence. And that excellence must embrace the ability to manage and successfully deliver on a constant stream of change, whether the changes are driven by new technology, new services, or new statutory requirements and public expectations. The Office of Court Management can be so engrossed with day-to-day operations, that it is difficult to step back and rethink HOW to deliver services to the courts. But we are doing exactly that.

This is a big cultural change. As lawyers and judges our culture tends to be cautious, tends to be protective of tradition, tends to place faith in the tried and true and be skeptical of change. Add to that an organization adapted to the resource-deprived days of the great recession, and you have an incremental approach to the planning of fundamental, system-wide investments.

But so much has been proven effective -- like the federal courts being paperless for twenty years -- that it is now time to accelerate our pace of change.

We also recognize the need to better promote the Trial Court's accomplishments as integral to our efforts to gain wider recognition and support for the work your court officials do every day. In that spirit, we just produced the Fiscal Year 2018 annual report three months earlier than in the past, so that we can provide you today with the full array of last year's accomplishments. It is now up online.

In partnership with Chief Justice Carey, we are collectively raising our expectations of ourselves and better leveraging our limited resources, including the support systems this organization needs and deserves to deliver quality justice.

We are making good headway in a number of areas that I do want to highlight.

Interpreter Services has been the focus of much-needed attention as the number of court users with Limited English Proficiency continues to grow.

Through concerted attention and coordination, we have directed additional resources to the Office of Court Interpreter Services, allowing implementation of regional oversight that enables more effective use of full-time and part-time interpreters and improve responsiveness when issues arise.

OCIS also has added 11 full-time positions, raising their full-time staff to 40 for the almost 150,000 interpreted events handled last year – a 30% year-over-year increase.

Under Chief Carey's leadership, a committee of judges and staff has spent the last year revising the interpreter standards and code of ethics.

We have selected new scheduling software that will interface with MassCourts and allow us to coordinate more effectively with local courts.

Our 150 part-time interpreters also are critical to our language responsiveness. We have enhanced their training, created a mentor program and expanded the group to add some languages.

Proof of our progress is dramatic. Two years ago, we estimate that we had interpreters in place only about 75% of the time when requested. We track that closely now and achieve a fulfillment rate that is now 98-99% every day

We also continue our steady progress toward e-courts and plan to accelerate the pace, taking key steps toward mandating civil case e-filing and service in the coming year.

Voluntary civil e-filing has expanded to most civil case types in the BMC & District Courts. Early next year the BMC will be the 1<sup>st</sup> department to accept the challenge to mandate civil e-filing. But the vision here is not just for filing, it is for working from an electronic record throughout the life of the case. With the SJC's adoption of a new Rule 1:11 a few weeks ago recognizing the digital record as the official record, paper documents need only be printed for convenience. Far fewer shopping carts of manila folders will need to be wheeled around the courthouse, and far fewer loaded into vehicles and driven to various housing and juvenile courts that sit away from the Clerk-Magistrates' offices.

The goals of e-courts are not limited to the civil side. The District Court has been working hard with police chiefs and departments across the state to implement EACC, the Electronic Application for Criminal Complaint. The BMC already receives these electronically from the Boston Police Department. Police record management system vendors are building interfaces to support this and about one-fourth of the agencies are online with us already. We expect that as of July 1, 2019, it will be mandatory for most.

In June, we completed the rollout of e-pay capability for criminal fines and fees. A study last year showed us that thousands of people visited our courts every week for no other reason than to pay a bill. Now, defendants can pay online 24/7 and have the payment properly credited and confirmed on their case. This process has already has collected more than \$1 million.

An online interview to generate and submit a small claims filing went live in July. With no advertising in a soft launch, hundreds of members of the public have gone online, answered a series of questions, and filed a properly formatted small claims case electronically. We are ramping up now to do an online tutorial to promote this important access to justice tool.

Technological change is also underway in Probation. By next June, Probation will complete the rollout of its first electronic case management system that will enable better data collection, supervision and follow up. You may never have thought about the way our trained and experienced Probation Officers have been working – but too often they spend hours in the field, taking longhand notes followed by hours back at the desk retyping them into notes and spreadsheets, and carrying around paper case files. This will make them more mobile, more efficient, and support more face time with their probationers' changing lives.

And we certainly know that with more technology comes more risk. One true indicator that we have turned the corner into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the courts have hired a Chief Information Security Officer who will push cybersecurity to the center of our operations.

In order to implement our technology plans we recognize the need to address IT Funding & Governance and are making headway in both areas.

We do our best to fund our technology needs with the funds provided by the legislature, but too often those funds come available too slowly to support transformational changes that we know are within our reach. That is why we are actively developing a comprehensive technology capital bond request to support the major near-term investments for the long-term payoff of the transition to a digital environment. And we now have a governance structure that allows us to identify and prioritize projects & only “green light” projects we can fully fund.

We recognize that recruitment & talent development are key for any high-performing organization.

We offer a variety of exciting career opportunities, but filling a vacancy in the Trial Court is too often a cumbersome and time-consuming process. We know we lose candidates along the way who find other work; we don't know how many candidates we miss because our jobs are harder to learn about or because people think they can only work here based on who they know.

Improving our recruiting and talent development is part of an ongoing restructure of the HR department, so that it can better serve all employees. As a complement to Chief Justice Gants' remarks related to attorney wellness, the HR department also is increasing focus on Wellness & Benefits, which we believe is a critical component in improving employee morale.

And as we grow our cultural competencies in serving the public, we are also improving the diversity of our workforce. Last February, for the first time, we issued a workforce Diversity Report so the public could see who works here. We are intentionally sending a strong message that we need – and want – to reflect the communities we serve. That report will be updated in the next few weeks. It shows exciting progress – our overall racial and ethnic diversity increased 2% in just the past year, from 23% to 25%, reflecting the state's demographics.

Last year, I spoke of technology and the workforce, and also about our capital facilities plan. I would be remiss not to report back to you today that the Legislature authorized all of the funds we requested in bonds to cover the first part of our long-term plan, as well as funds for additional projects in the next

phases of our plan. We continue to work closely with the Governor's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance and have more than \$80 million of projects underway this fiscal year.

The largest of these is the new Regional Justice Center in Lowell, which will give much-needed relief to currently overtaxed facilities, and creates a magnificent new centerpiece of civic architecture by the canal downtown. It is on schedule and on budget to be finished at the end of 2019 and occupied at the start of 2020.

I hope that I have given you some sense of the ways we are taking our operational vision to the next level. We are setting our sights higher, since we firmly believe that the Judiciary's work deserves an operational infrastructure based on best practices.

And that perspective and commitment now form the foundation for our ambitious agenda. As I said at the start, it is a wonderful time of excitement and progress in the Commonwealth's Trial Court.