

The Chief Judge's 2016 Hearing on Civil Legal Services in New York

The Hon. Janet DiFiore, Chief Judge of the State of New York, announces a statewide public hearing to evaluate the continuing unmet civil legal services needs in New York. The Chief Judge will preside over the hearing, where witnesses from all regions of the State will testify about the significance of accessible, publicly funded civil legal services. The Chief Judge will report to the Legislature, as requested in the June 2010 Joint Resolution, on the information obtained at the hearing and on the continuing work of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. It is anticipated that the hearing testimony will inform future efforts by the Permanent Commission to enhance access to justice and ensure the fair administration of justice for all New Yorkers.

Chief Judge DiFiore will hold the statewide hearing at the New York Court of Appeals. The Chief Judge will be joined on the hearing panel by all four Presiding Justices of the Appellate Divisions: Acting Presiding Justice Peter Tom of the First Department, Presiding Justice Randall T. Eng of the Second Department, Presiding Justice Karen K. Peters of the Third Department and Presiding Justice Gerald J. Whalen of the Fourth Department, as well as New York State's Chief Administrative Judge, Lawrence K. Marks, and the President of the New York State Bar Association, Claire Gutekunst.

THE HEARING WILL TAKE PLACE AS FOLLOWS:

Tuesday, September 27, 2016, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., Court of Appeals, 20 Eagle Street, Albany

THE PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC HEARING is to receive the views of interested individuals, organizations and entities on the following issues:

- The impact of Judiciary Civil Legal Services funding on the delivery of civil legal services, in particular in enhancing the fair and efficient administration of justice in the state courts.
- The current state and scope of the unmet need for civil legal services by low-income New Yorkers confronting legal problems involving the "essentials of life," including housing, family stability and personal safety in domestic relations, access to health care or education, or subsistence income and benefits.
- The economic and social consequences due to the lack of sufficient civil legal services in communities, including the impact on the elderly, veterans, and children.
- The benefits to individuals, communities, the courts and the State, from the provision of civil legal services in matters involving the "essentials of life."
- The particular problems affecting the availability of legal services in rural communities and how to address them.
- The unique issues presented to state courts, particularly family court, in proceedings related to immigration issues.
- The potential for reduction in the unmet need through:
 - Preventative- and early-intervention services.
 - Enhanced use of technology, including identifying areas where improvements in technology access and utilization can increase the delivery and efficacy of legal services.
 - Expansion of the availability of pro bono legal services by private attorneys.
 - Innovations in law school and law student involvement in serving communities in need through clinical, experiential and fellowship options for students, including the Pro Bono Scholars Program and Poverty Justice Solutions.
 - Programs using volunteers who are not lawyers, including the Court Navigator Program and Legal Hand neighborhood storefront centers.
 - New and/or expanded community collaborations between legal services providers and law schools, colleges and universities, public libraries and hospitals.

THE CHIEF JUDGE'S HEARING PANEL WILL CONSIDER BOTH ORAL TESTIMONY (BY INVITATION ONLY) AND WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS.

Individuals interested in presenting oral testimony or providing a written submission are asked to follow the procedures and to adhere to the deadlines described below. Please note that the Hearing Panel cannot accept any comments, written or spoken, addressing details of individual litigation or comments about individual judges or attorneys.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, oral testimony is by invitation only. If you are interested in being invited to testify at the hearing, you should send an email to acesstojusticecommission@nycourts.gov no later than **September 13, 2016**. **Proposed testimony should be no more than 10 minutes in length.** When requesting an invitation, please (1) identify yourself and your affiliation (and if you are requesting an invitation for someone else to testify, that individual's name and affiliation); and (2) attach a prepared statement or a detailed outline of the proposed testimony, specifying which of the topics described above will be addressed. In advance of the hearing, invitations to testify will be issued and will include an approximate time for each presenter's testimony. For those not invited to present oral testimony, your proposed testimony will be deemed a written submission.

Individuals unable to attend the hearing, or those only interested in providing a written submission, may send their remarks, no later than September 13, 2016, to the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, which is assisting the Chief Judge in preparing for the hearing and in reporting on its results. See below for information for submitting remarks by email or US mail.

Email: acesstojusticecommission@nycourts.gov

Mail: New York State Permanent Commission
on Access to Justice
c/o Jessica Klein, Esq.
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