Dear Judge,

Attached is a report prepared by the Supreme Court's Office of Court Services that provides an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on statewide caseloads and court performance and what the future may hold for potential caseload surges and backlogs.

We know that each court across Ohio has experienced the pandemic in unique ways. Nevertheless, our research indicates that collectively our courts have done well over the past year in continuing to ensure access to justice and providing for the effective administration of justice despite so many difficult obstacles.

Most courts used remote technology to great effect in keeping cases moving, and that is evident with the widespread success of the Supreme Court's technology grants and the innovative work of courts involved in our online dispute resolution pilot program. It is also evident with the funding that the Office of Criminal Justice Services is continuing to provide courts for technology and sanitization efforts. The incredible work of the Supreme Court's Task Force on Improving Court Operations Using Remote Technology—whose report will soon be shared with you—will lay a solid foundation for leveraging the many things courts learned over the last year in how to use technology in new and productive ways.

We hope this information will assist in your planning efforts and help you anticipate caseloads over the coming months and beyond. We encourage you to review your court's caseload statistics and redouble your efforts to monitor clearance rates and overage rates going forward.

To the extent your court's case management system does not provide sufficient analytic reporting, please refer to the following resources to assess your court's caseloads and performance data:

- **Online data dashboards** – These tools will provide you with real-time clearance rate data. Clearance rates show how well a court is keeping up with its incoming caseload. Clearance rates serve the vital function of a bellwether measure, foreshadowing the potential growth in backlogs, which, in turn, can result in unnecessary case aging and the delayed administration of justice. For real-time incoming caseload data as well as real-time overage rate data, you'll need instead to use the downloadable report feature on the Supreme Court's *eStats* web portal.

- **eStats report** – On the *eStats* web portal, available using log in credentials provided to each court's administrative judge, courts can view and download a report that is laid out like the standard Supreme Court report, but with the addition of overage rate and clearance rate data. That report can be generated for a single month or for a range of months. Instructions are available for logging in, running the report, and understanding overage rates and clearance rates.

In addition, staff from the Case Management Section of the Supreme Court are available to

provide technical assistance as you explore additional ways to maximize your caseflow management capabilities. Detailed information is available on their webpage concerning the Supreme Court's statistical reporting program, including "Quick Guides" to help you understand the general content of your caseload reports. There are also resources available to assist with managing caseloads such as the Strategies for Addressing a Backlog of Hearings Bench Card and the Pathway Approach for Civil Cases Bench Card.   You can reach the Case Management Section staff at casemgmt@sc.ohio.gov.

Thank you for all of your tremendous work during the pandemic to preserve the ability for the public to avail themselves of your services and access justice. As we emerge together from the pandemic, we must remain vigilant and make appropriate data-informed decisions that strengthen public trust and confidence in our court system.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor
Chief Justice