

**From:** [Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor](#)  
**Subject:** Foreclosure and Civil Justice Report and Recommendations  
**Date:** Friday, June 19, 2020 11:01:46 AM  
**Attachments:** [Foreclosure and Civil Justice Report FINAL June 2020.pdf](#)

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Dear Judge,

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), you and your staff have worked to develop innovative strategies to meet the needs of the public in providing a fair, impartial, and speedy resolution of cases without unnecessary delay. In the past weeks, we have seen courts conduct virtual adoption proceedings, hold pretrial conferences over the phone, and provide tablets to parties in the court parking lot so that they could participate in hearings. These are just a few examples of the many implemented by you and your staff. I am so incredibly proud of the creativity, dedication, and flexibility you have shown during this time of uncertainty and hardship.

It is anticipated that the effects of COVID-19 on the court system and the economy will be long-lasting. It will take months, some say years, to recover from the financial hardships experienced recently, and as a result, the Court anticipates an influx of foreclosure filings. Attached you will find *Foreclosures & Civil Justice: Report & Recommendations*. Please read this report and use its recommendations to help you respond efficiently to any surge of new cases while at the same time addressing the backlog of cases facing many courts. As updates are made to this document, a current copy will be available on the Supreme Court of Ohio's coronavirus resources webpage: <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/coronavirus/default.aspx>.

Continuing to leverage remote technology is a win-win for the courts, the lawyers, and the parties. We've gotten nothing but positive comments from all involved including 'court-watchers' and the media. Almost 300 courts in 87 counties received \$6 million of the Supreme Court's budget allocated for emergency remote technology grants to purchase cameras, microphones, video conferencing platforms, and equipment for use in virtual proceedings. These resources allow Ohio's courts to function in times of limited operations, but also serve to reduce barriers to access as conditions begin to normalize. Litigants face many barriers to in-person court appearances such as child care, transportation, and time off work. Virtual proceedings increase rates of appearance, promote efficiency, and reduce continuances. I applaud your continued willingness to embrace technology, not just as a means of maintaining access to courts during this public health emergency, but as part of an overall commitment to improving the justice system. This effort should include finding ways to allow the public to observe virtual proceedings and ensure the transparency of our courts.

During the coming months, guidance will continue to be developed as we see the impact of lifting restrictions, the extent of the economic recovery or lack thereof, and other indicators. One thing is certain, society's problems come to the courts for resolution. We must be part of the solution. Your nimbleness will always be needed and I am confident that you will continue to rise to the challenge. I thank you for your steadfast dedication to the courts and service to all within your community. Please remember that the Supreme Court and our entire staff stand ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor  
Chief Justice