

Minutes
Connecticut Judicial Branch
Access to Justice Commission
July 9, 2024

The Access to Justice Commission met on July 9, 2024. The meeting was hybrid with most members attending in person in room 4B at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut and a few members attending remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Members in attendance: Chief Judge William H. Bright, Jr. (Chair); Judge Walter Spader; Judge Christine Perra Rapillo; Judge Karen DeMeola; Judge Cecil Thomas; Judge Elizabeth Stewart; Attorney Jamey Bell; Attorney Jan Chiaretto; Attorney Travis Claxton; Mr. Patrick Deak; Deputy Dean Fiona Doherty; Ms. Alejandra Donath; Attorney Tais C. Ericson; Dean Brian Gallini; Attorney Edward Heath; Ms. Krista Hess; Ms. Claudia Beth Jalowka; Ms. Sandra LugoGines; Attorney Benjamin Nissim; Attorney Moy Ogilvie; Professor Rachel Reeves; Attorney Rose Ann Rush; Attorney James T. Shearin; Attorney Jennifer Shukla

Absent: Attorney Tanya Bovee; Ms. Dawn LaValle

Also in attendance was Ms. Nicole Collins from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM by Judge Bright.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Judge Bright welcomed the members of the Commission and asked each member to introduce, themselves and state their affiliations or area of expertise. The Commission includes representatives from various stakeholders, such as, legal aid providers, law schools, Judicial Branch law libraries and the public libraries, the private bar, and leadership from the Connecticut Bar Association.

II. Ground Rules

Judge Bright reported that the Commission must comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Meetings of the Commission will be live streamed on the Judicial Meetings YouTube page for members of the public to view. In addition, members of the public may attend the meetings in person.

III. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Krista Hess and seconded by Benjamin Nissim to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 4, 2021. The motion was passed by a 21-0 vote with Judge Stewart, Jamey Bell, and Alejandra Donath abstaining and two members absent.

IV. Goals for the Commission

Judge Bright expressed that implementation will be one of the most important processes when forming sustainable programs. Using the ideas and recommendations that transpire from the Subcommittees will be the starting point for the implementation process.

To begin with working towards the goal of implementation, Judge Bright stated members of the Commission should begin identifying current obstacles that members of the public face when interacting with the judicial system and begin to develop recommendations to assess their needs. Judge Bright encouraged Commission members to be creative and think “outside the box” when considering proposals to narrow the justice gap. Further, the Commission is encouraged to engage the very communities and stakeholders we are seeking to assist and recruit including self-represented parties, the legal aid providers and clientele, and pro bono attorneys.

Judge Bright additionally reported that due to the success from the last Pro Bono Summit, there will be future conversations in preparation for an Access to Justice Conference.

V. Discussion of Proposed Subcommittees

Judge Bright provided an overview of each proposed Subcommittee and distributed a draft of the charges to the members. The proposed Subcommittees are as follows:

1. Legal Aid
2. Pro Bono
3. Self-Represented Parties/Access Issues
4. Law Libraries/Law Schools

Members are asked to review the drafted charges, volunteer for at least one Subcommittee, and consider recommending non-commission members for inclusion on the Subcommittees. Once the Subcommittees are formed, they will be asked to finalize their charges and meet on a regular basis to advance the work of the Commission.

VI. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting date of the Access to Justice Commission is to be determined, however, the Commission will plan to meet quarterly, with the Subcommittees meeting once or twice in between each Commission meeting. A survey will be distributed to the members of the Commission to indicate their preferred date and times for future meetings.

VII. Motion to Adjourn

Claudia Beth Jalowka moved, and Edward Heath seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Commission approved the motion by a 24-0 vote with two members absent. Judge Bright adjourned the meeting at 2:56 PM.