

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Connecticut Judicial Branch**  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
**November 20, 2017**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
**Hartford Community Court**  
**80 Washington Street, Hartford, CT**

**Members In Attendance:** Justice Maria A. Kahn, Co-Chair, Hon. Ingrid L. Moll, Co-Chair, Hon. William H. Bright, Jr., Deputy Dean Muneer I. Ahmad, Dean Jennifer Gerarda Brown, Atty. Janice J. Chiaretto, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Edwin Colon, Atty. Joseph D. D'Alesio, Atty. Tais Ericson, Dean Timothy Fisher, Attorney Patricia Cruz Fragoso, Ms. Krista Hess, Attorney Chris R. Nelson, Attorney Moy N. Ogilvie, and Attorney James P. Sexton. Also in attendance: Caseflow Management Specialist Atty. Damon Goldstein, Court Operations.

**Members Not Present:** Ms. Dawn LaValle, Assistant Dean Karen DeMeola.

- I. **Welcome from Co-Chairs and Introduction of Commission Members;** Justice Kahn and Judge Moll welcomed the Commission and the members shared brief biographies with the group.
- II. **Review and Discussion of the *Access to Justice Commission Charge*:** The Commission's charge, which is posted on its webpage, was discussed. It is understood that the Commission's role will be in an advisory capacity. The members may, as their time and circumstances allow, join existing and proposed workgroups, or suggest colleagues with subject matter expertise, as appropriate.
- III. **Review of Ongoing Access to Justice Initiatives:**
  - **Workgroup on Libraries and ATJ Implementation** plan: Ms. Hess, who co-chairs this workgroup with Ms. LaValle and Atty. Jeffrey Dowd, gave a brief update to the members, who were provided with an overview of the workgroup's proposed activities. The Workgroup will facilitate a partnership between the Judicial Branch and the Connecticut State Library over the coming year to: launch a multi-media, multi-lingual access to justice PSA (Public Service Announcement) campaign including video, audio, written press releases, brochures and posters; and continue to offer training to public librarians on how to find law-related information, build legal reference skills, and make appropriate referrals to best assist patrons. Additional activities will be considered as time and resources allow.
  - **Videoconferencing and Pro Bono:** Judge Bright led a discussion on the use of videoconferencing across the Branch, from its use for certain proceedings involving incarcerated parties; for certain types of pretrial conferences; and for people with disabilities. Judge Bright said the Branch is developing a platform that would allow attorneys to conference in with judges from remote locations. While the current Practice Book Rule allows parties to request videoconferencing, it is possible that the Rule may be expanded to allow non-party witnesses to provide testimony, as appropriate. There was discussion among the members about significant use by the private bar of videoconferencing, and currently available technology. The Judicial Branch does not use commercial videoconferencing technology, but uses a more secure platform. Ms. Hess and Judge Bright, who formerly chaired the Branch's Pro Bono Committee, whose work is being absorbed by the Commission, spoke briefly about three current pro bono programs offered for people seeking temporary restraining orders (TROs) in Hartford, Middletown, and Waterbury. The Judicial Branch continues to house Volunteer Attorney Programs in the areas of Family law, Contract Collections, Foreclosure, and Small Claims in courthouses in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New Britain, New London, Middletown, Stamford, and Waterbury, although not every pro bono program is available in every judicial district. The Commission was told that a listing of the available [volunteer attorney programs](#) are available online, along with [additional free legal clinics](#).

- **Incubator/Modest Means Programs:** Atty. Nelson provided an overview of what steps are being taken in the legal community to provide legal counsel to people with civil cases who do not qualify for free legal representation because of their income levels. There is currently an incubator program with five attorneys in Bridgeport, and, Dean Fisher noted, another incubator program exists with four attorneys at the University of Connecticut School of Law, that provide reduced-rate representation to people. Incubator programs provide attorneys with subsidized space, equipment, etc. in exchange for providing pro bono/low bono legal services. Atty. Nelson noted that the Bridgeport program was established with a good deal of assistance from a Quinnipiac Law School professor and staff. It was also noted that the attorneys housed in the incubator programs are solo practitioners. Atty. Nelson also told the Commission that the New Haven Bar Association, which has a modest/moderate means program, is looking to expand its program to Yale-New Haven Hospital in the development of a medical/legal partnership. Such a program works with people who are patients with legal needs but little to no means of pursuing claims, such as lead paint in housing, the denial of disability benefits, and other related medical/social service needs. Deputy Dean Ahmad told the Commission of a similar program already in place that involves Yale Law School students.

#### IV. **Review and Consideration of New Access to Justice Initiatives:**

- **Appellate Pro Bono Program;** Judge Moll told the Commission that more than 35 percent of appellate-level cases involve at least one self-represented party, and while there are a fair amount of pro bono programs for lower court parties, none exists at the appellate level. In order to help ‘level the playing field,’ this new workgroup will conduct an assessment of other states’ appellate pro bono programs to see if one could be established in Connecticut. Atty. Sexton said that he would be very interested in working on this initiative. Judge Moll will chair this workgroup.
- **Limited Scope Representation (LSR) Symposium:** Justice Kahn and Ms. Hess told the Commission that they are coordinating with the Connecticut Bar Foundation and the Connecticut Bar Association to conduct a half-day symposium for attorneys on how limited scope representation, also known as unbundling, works under Connecticut civil practice book rules in family, housing, civil, and small claims matters. The event is set for May 4 and will include panel discussions with Judges and attorneys. Justice Kahn and Judge Moll urged the Commission to not only attend the symposium, but to help publicize the event.
- **Recommendations from the [Governor’s Taskforce to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil Matters](#) :** Attorney Goldstein, who was requested to provide information by Attys. Ericson and D’Alesio, told the Commission that a Task Force recommendation that the Judicial Branch provide attorneys to people seeking and those the subject of temporary restraining order applications in family court, is in the planning stage. The Branch will work with non-profit legal services providers and the Public Defender’s Office to develop a pilot in a single Judicial District to be determined by the Chief Court Administrator, and the applicants and respondents would have to meet indigency guidelines for the appointment. A new workgroup may be established to address the Task Force recommendations for the Branch.

- V. **Formation of Working Groups:** Judge Moll and Justice Kahn led a discussion about the Commission’s established workgroups on Libraries and ATJ, and Videoconferencing and ATJ, and new workgroups on Appellate Pro Bono, General Pro Bono, LSR, and Law Schools and Pro Bono. Ms. Collins will follow up with the members, providing a brief description of the goals of the workgroups to gauge each member’s interest.

- VI. **Commission Meeting Schedule for 2018 and Adjourn:** A date for a March meeting will be circulated. The Commission adjourned at 3:00 p.m.