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December 16, 2020

Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts
Comments on Proposal for Virtual Civil Jury Trials
Hughes Justice Complex; P.O. Box 037
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0037

RE: COMMENT TO THE PROPOSAL FOR VIRTUAL CIVIL JURY TRIALS

Dear Judge Grant:

On behalf of the Conference of Civil Division Managers (“Conference”), please accept these comments to the proposal for virtual civil jury trials (“proposal”) set forth in the November 25, 2020 Notice to the Bar.

The Conference supports the proposal that consent should not be required for a virtual trial to proceed. Allowing parties to “opt out” does all but guarantee an insufficient number of trials, thereby wasting panels of prospective jurors.

The Conference believes it is important to be conscious of what jurors see during the trial, as it will be easy for them to become bored and disinterested. To keep jurors engaged throughout the process for trials that are not entirely virtual, the use of multiple camera angles should be utilized, almost analogous to producing the broadcast of a live sporting event. Hardware that will switch the camera angle based upon who is speaking, or having staff physically change the camera view should also be considered. However, the use of more technology may also complicate things which is why simpler cases, such as Track 2 automobile negligence matters, should proceed first as we learn how to conduct trials virtually and navigate the technological hurdles.

On behalf of the Conference, we thank you for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,

s/ Stephanie Hudson

Stephanie Hudson
Chair, Conference of Civil Division Managers

cc. Steven D. Bonville, Chief of Staff
Jennifer M. Perez, Director, Trial Court Services
Taironda E. Phoenix, Asst. Director, Civil Practice
Jessica Lewis Kelly, Special Assistant to the Administrative Director
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