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Good morning,

This order would be an important step forward, but I believe it can – and should – go further.

In addition to those proceedings that should resume in-person, Pre-Indictment Conferences (or PDC, EDC, etc. based on the county), must crown the list. Prior to 2020, the PIC offered an opportunity to swiftly resolve cases that might otherwise linger. The environment created by forcing all parties into a room lends itself to negotiation and motivates resolution. Virtualizing these conferences have rendered them practically meaningless formalities stripped, in many instances, of any realistic opportunity to settle.

Indeed, the defendants are not confronted with the gravity of their position from the comfort of their own bed (many of whom have quite literally just awoken), and with no consequences for what would otherwise constitute a gross breach of decorum in dress and demeanor, they have no reason to take their position seriously. Without the imposing, personal attention of a court and courtroom, the motivation to have productive conversations is absent.

Secondly, masking and social distancing requirements should be revoked – specifically with respect to grand jury. Our county's grand jury room is too small to accommodate these restrictions and we have been forced to rent space locally. Further – and more importantly – the clear masks cause needless discomfort to jurors while attorneys have to speak at length without the ability to breathe normally. Practically every other institution in the state has moved on from these ligatures, but the courts remain static.

We beseech the court for the flexibility to resume normal operations to the extent possible. With only a few more adjustments, we can begin digging out of the backlog avalanche that's been smothering us for well over a year.

We appreciate your consideration and wish good counsel for the Court in the coming weeks.

Respectfully,

Anthony J. Robinson

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