

#079

LESLIE MITCHNER  
194 Laurel Circle  
Princeton, NJ 08540



August 3, 2021

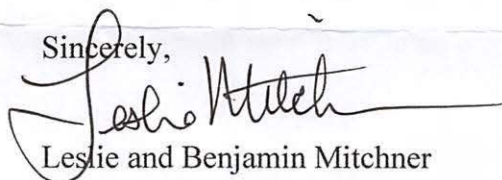
Glenn Grant, JAD  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
25 Market Street—8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richard J Hughes Office Complex  
PO Box 037  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0984

Dear Justice Grant:

I am writing to you because we have heard that New Jersey courts are considering continuing to use remote hearings for civil commitments. We strongly believe that this is a violation of people's fair hearing rights. The system is already impersonal and biased to an astonishing degree, even without adding a technological element to the mix. We know because we have been through it—repeatedly—when Benjamin was at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. Remote hearings during which people are not face to face with each other strengthens the likelihood that someone will continue to be committed (or will be committed) whether they should be or not. It is easier to simply and literally cut someone off—just shut down the boxed picture or the audio or cut away to someone else. You cannot do that in person. Sitting in the same room with a judge and attorneys, and having a physical presence makes it slightly harder to simply dismiss the person who has been committed and should/or should not be released or the person who is to be committed.

Your general record is one of supporting those who need a voice—don't cut them off now. We are not any longer at the height of the pandemic when such procedures were understandable for health and safety reasons.

Sincerely,

  
Leslie and Benjamin Mitchner

