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From: Dolores Hastings <Dolores.Hastings@appealingtrans.com>
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To: Comments Mailbox
Subject: [External]Comments on Future Court Operations

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Dear Judge Grant,

As a New Jersey AOC certified transcriber for over 25 years I feel that I am in a good position to send you some remarks on this topic. First off, these are not complaints, these are serious concerns that I have regarding the quality of the record. The AOC has done a wonderful job in very difficult circumstances during this Pandemic and the Deputy Clerk, Ms. Carroll, and her staff have always gone out of their way to assist us with issues. However, serious audio issues exist when Zoom and other recording platforms that are re-recorded into CourtSmart. There are many times, I would say at least 60% of the time, that there are issues with the recordings and indiscernible notations are throughout the transcripts. Out of that 60% I would say that 25% are very serious. The few times when I was able to get the original Zoom recording it was like night and day; I would have an audio recording that was barely audible at all and then when I received the MP4 Zoom recording it was clear as a bell. I do understand that these are only retained for a week or two and therefore it is rare to be able to receive an original Zoom recording. If there is any possible way that these recordings could be retained and received by us versus the CourtSmart recording it would change everything. I also understand that they take up a lot of room on the servers and that is most likely the reason why they are not available to us, but if these remote proceedings are going to be here for a long time it would be so advantageous to the litigants to have us transcribe from those original recordings.

Also, when these remote hearings began I did some research and found that if stand alone microphones were hooked up to someone's computer with a USB line versus someone just speaking into their laptop it made a major difference. I notified most attorneys that I deal with about this and the ones that took my advice came across much clearer in future hearings. Of

course there are always going to be some sound glitches, background noises, etc., and I know the judges are, for the most part, trying to advise people speaking remotely to mute themselves if not speaking and to be in a place without any background noises, etc. This does help. There are also times where the judge's microphone must be in the wrong place or whatever, but they cannot be heard. Most times if we request the Court's backup copy it is basically the same as what we originally were sent. It's just hit or miss and I guess that's my concern. There needs to be commonality in how these things are recorded and how the microphones are set up.

I've done a few cases lately that took place in the courtroom however, the microphones are at times in the wrong places and the audio is horrendous. Most times however, the in-court proceedings are, of course, pretty darn good except when someone drops their voice and has a mask on, or they walk away from the microphone.

I can only speak for myself, but my agency does our absolute best to back up and re-listen, even if it takes 25 times, to try and figure out what is being said. I even go so far as pulling up briefs on ACMS to ascertain what the proceeding is about so that I can get the gist of what the proceeding is about and so that I can pick up some terms that may otherwise have sounded like something else. When a recording is so low or so garbled it can play tricks on the ears, we may type something that we truly thought we heard and it is incorrect. I found this out after I did a transcript and later on received the original Zoom recording. I was quite frustrated and appalled that what I truly thought I heard was not what was said at all. It really bothered me as I take a lot of pride in my work and I don't mind saying that I am very, very good at what I do. It takes us at least 3 times more to do a transcript these days but it cannot be helped, and we do it. That one transcript that was so difficult to do took me 12 hours; it was only 66 pages long. When I finally received the original recording I re-did the transcript from scratch and completed it in 2.5 hours, which is a normal time frame for that many pages. Again, these remarks are not complaints, they are truly brought to your attention for the best interests of the litigants. I do hope that these remarks are of some assistance.

With kind regards,

Dolores Suzy Hastings
President/Agency Director
Appealing Transcripts, Inc.
8 Victoria Drive
Clark, New Jersey 07066
Phone: 732/680-1610
Fax: 732/680-1615
Dolores.Hastings@appealingtrans.com

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