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JOINT MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF CIRCUIT JUDGES
AND THE
DISTRICT COURT CHIEF JUDGE'S
COMMITTEE

Roberta Warnken
CHIEF CLERK
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A joint meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges and District Court Chief Judges Committee was held Monday, September 15, 2025, at the Maryland Judicial Center, beginning at 9:30 a.m., and remotely via Zoom.

Conference of Circuit Judges Members:

Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin, Vice Chair

Matthew Barrett	Hon. Wendy S. Epstein	Hon. S. James Sarbanes
Hon. James A. Bonifant	Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty	Hon. Brenda A. Sexton
Hon. Audrey J.S. Carrión	Hon. ShaRon M. Grayson Kelsey	Hon. Brian D. Shockley
Hon. DaNeeka V. Cotton	Hon. Julia A. Martz-Fisher	Hon. Anthony F. Vittoria
Hon. Heather S. DeWees	Hon. Vicki M. Pauler	Hon. Lara C. Weathersbee

District Court Chief Judge's Committee Members:

Hon. John P. Morrissey, Chair

Hon. Erich M. Bean	Kimberly Hurd	Hon. Laura M. Robinson
Hon. Wayne A. Brooks	Hon. Melvin J. Jews	Hon. Michelle R. Saunders
Hon. David E. Carey	Hon. Sherri D. Koch	Hon. Eric W. Schaffer
Hon. Christy H. Chesser	Hon. Kerwin A. Miller, Sr.	Hon. Nancy B. Shuger
Hon. Stacey M. Cobb Smith	Hon. Stephan M. Moylan	Hon. Shaem C.P. Spencer
Hon. Rand L. Gelber	Hon. John E. Nunn, III	Hon. Nicole E. Taylor
Hon. Lisa A. Hall Johnson	Hon. Paula A. Price	Roberta Warnken
Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer	Hon. Krystin J. Richardson	Hon. Dorothy J. Wilson

Guests:

Nancy Faulkner	Andrea Murphy	Judy Rupp
Hon. Lawrence P. Fletcher-Hill	Kelley O'Connor	Gillian Tonkin
Hon. James H. Green	Suzanne Pelz	William Vormelker
Hon. Stacy A. Mayer	Sharon Reed	

1. Welcome and Introductions – *Hon. John P. Morrissey and Hon. Fred S. Hecker*

Chief Judge John P. Morrissey and Judge Fred S. Hecker welcomed members and reminded them that the meeting was being livestreamed for the public. Judge Morrissey and Judge Hecker explained that the Conference of Circuit Judges (CCJ) and the District Court Chief Judge's Committee (DCCJC) meet annually to foster a collaborative relationship, exchange ideas, and hear legislative updates that pertain to both groups. Members then participated in roundtable introductions.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the May 19, 2025, Meeting

Judge Wendy S. Epstein moved for approval of the May 19, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and, after hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

3. Legislative Updates – *Hon. Stacy A. Mayer*

Judge Stacy A. Mayer (Chair, Legislative Committee) provided an overview of the structure and purpose of the Legislative Committee and presented some 2025 legislation that impacts the Judiciary. She reviewed passed bills of interest related to civil law, including expungements, peace and protective orders, family law, and landlord/tenant, criminal law, traffic law, court administration, as well as the Judicial Conference Package submitted by the Judiciary.

Judge Hecker noted that a discussion was held at Family Law University regarding whether [House Bill 1191/Senate Bill 548](#) (Family Law – Child Custody – Determinations), which goes into effect on October 1, 2025, applies to cases filed before the effective date but heard afterward. Regardless of whether the bill applies retroactively, it is considered best practice to address all relevant statutory factors. Discussion ensued that the factors are similar, but not identical to *Taylor, Saunders*, and [Rule 9-204.1](#).

Judge Mayer reported a significant change to the Reckless Driving statute. [House Bill 744/Senate Bill 590](#) (Motor Vehicle – Reckless, Negligent, and Aggressive Driving) makes reckless driving an incarcerable offense and increases the maximum monetary penalties for negligent driving and aggressive driving. It also expands the list of traffic offenses that constitute aggressive driving.

Regarding [House Bill 634/Senate Bill 295](#) (Income Tax – Income Tax Reconciliation Program – Established), Judge Hecker informed members that the Post-Trial Rights Form had been updated to include information about the program.

Judge Mayer also reviewed several bills of interest that were not passed including a bill that would have established an Artificial Intelligence Evidence Clinic Pilot Program in the

Administrative Office of the Courts, a bill that would have eliminated contested elections for circuit court judges, and legislation that would have added one additional judgeship in St. Mary's County.

The [2025 Legislative Committee Report](#) is available for reference on CourtNet.

4. New Chair of the Complex Civil Litigation Committee – *Hon. Lawrence P. Fletcher-Hill*

Judge Lawrence P. Fletcher-Hill informed conference members that he was appointed vice-chair of the Judicial Ethics Committee in July 2025. In light of this appointment, he requested approval to step down as chair of the Complex Civil Litigation Committee and for Judge Robert J. Thompson to assume the role. Judge Fletcher-Hill added that he intends to remain a member of the committee through the end of his term. Judge Yolanda L. Curtin moved to approve the request, and Judge Epstein seconded the motion. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.

5. Pretrial / Detainers Project – *Hon. John P. Morrissey*

Judge Morrissey provided an overview of the Justice Reinvestment Oversight Board (Board) and informed members that the Board is exploring efforts to standardize pretrial practices across the State. A Standardization Workgroup has been formed to define the levels of pretrial release, standardize the eligibility criteria for pretrial release, and evaluate whether a more effective risk assessment tool could be implemented. Additionally, the Board is examining shifting from the private home detention model to government-based home detention programs.

The Board is also considering ways that the Division of Correction (DOC) and Judiciary can more efficiently handle detainers. Currently, detainers from other jurisdictions are typically not served until an individual is being released from custody in the holding jurisdiction. This practice is inefficient, as it creates delays that could be avoided if the detainer were served while the individual is serving their sentence. It also impacts access to justice for both defendants and victims and delays court ordered housing placements for defendants.

Judge James H. Green explained that [Rule 4-212\(f\)\(2\)](#) does not specify a timeframe within which a defendant must be served with a detainer. The Board is considering proposing a modification to the Rule to address this issue. Additionally, it is not currently docketed when detainers are filed. Discussions are being held regarding the potential addition of this information to MDEC.

Judge Green also noted that, while [MD Code, Correctional Services § 8-503](#) requires that a defendant be served with a detainer within 15 days of its receipt and permits local Sheriff's Offices to transport individuals, the Rule applies only to intrastate detainers, not local ones. The

Board is considering the use of remote hearing options to ease the burden on the DOC to transport defendants.

Judge Morrissey advised that he, along with several other Board members, will be discussing these matters with the Warden's Association, the Sheriff's Association, and the State's Attorney's Association at their upcoming meetings. Additionally, he will be reaching out to conference members to gauge interest in participating in the workgroup.

6. For the Good of the Order

Judge Morrissey announced that the Baltimore City District courthouse (civil building) will be relocating to a new courthouse building at 500 N. Calvert St. on October 14, 2025.

Judge Morrissey informed conference members that a Statewide Steering Committee on Behavioral Health and the Justice System is being formed and will be chaired by Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader and Lt. Governor Aruna Miller. The purpose of the committee is to support the coordinated implementation of behavioral health priorities that were identified at the Behavioral Health Summit held in May 2025.

Judge Hecker reminded members that, effective July 1, 2026, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will be required to establish an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program in counties without existing programs, and the Office of the Public Defender will be required to provide representation in AOT proceedings ([SB 453](#)). An advisory panel was formed and is collaborating with MDH to develop best practices for handling these proceedings. Additionally, Judge Hecker was informed by the Carroll County Local Behavioral Health Authority that the State plans to pilot AOT programs in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, and on the Eastern Shore in 2026. They also extended an invitation to virtually observe AOT court proceedings in other states. Judge Hecker will forward the invitation to conference members.

Judge Hecker advised conference members that, following discussion at the May 19, 2025, Conference of Circuit Judges meeting, he sent a letter to the Rules Committee proposing that [Rule 16-104](#) be amended to allow circuit administrative judges to designate an acting circuit administrative judge when they are unavailable, similar to the provision in [Rule 16-105](#) for county administrative judges. Upon approval by the Supreme Court of Maryland, the amendment will take effect. Judge Hecker also noted that, because Baltimore City is its own circuit, the acting administrative judge designated there will also serve as the acting circuit administrative judge.

Judge Wayne A. Brooks informed members that MDH is no longer compensating medical professionals for competency evaluations in Howard County, resulting in many doctors no longer performing them. Judge Morrissey will discuss the matter with MDH at their upcoming meeting.

Judge Brooks advised that an issue arose in Howard County regarding local police directing individuals to file Emergency Petitions (EPs) in Baltimore City after hours. He inquired how other jurisdictions handle after-hours EPs. Judge Lisa A. Hall-Johnson explained that Prince George's County assigns on-call judges on a rotating schedule to handle after-hours matters, including EPs. District Court Commissioners in Prince George's County collect the completed forms, forward them to the assigned judge, and then inform the petitioner of the decision and next steps. A question was raised about potentially submitting legislation regarding commissioners handling EPs. Judge Morrissey responded that commissioners do not have statutory authority to do so but will look into the matter.

Judge Morrissey said that the Compensation Committee is considering the possibility of additional pay for administrative judges. He will continue to provide updates as they become available.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:21am. The next meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges will be held on November 17, 2025, via Zoom