IN THE MATTER OF:	*	**IN THE**
COVID-19 PHASE II	*	**CIRCUIT COURT**
COURT REOPENING PLAN	*	**FOR HARFORD COUNTY**
	*	**ORDER NO. _____**

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ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2020, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland issued an Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations which establishes a plan for gradually reopening the Courts and outlines operational directives to the courts across the state as the judicial branch continues to monitor the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-105, the County Administrative Judge is responsible for the administration of the circuit court, including supervision of the judges, officials, and employees of the court, implementation and enforcement of all administrative policies, rules, orders, and directives of the Court of Appeals, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, the State Court Administrator, and the Circuit Administrative Judge of the judicial circuit, and performance of any other administrative duties necessary to the effective administration of the internal management of the court.

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in the undersigned Administrative Judge of this Court, and consistent with the aforementioned Administrative Order of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland; it is hereby

ORDERED, that effective June 5, 2020, the Circuit Court for Harford County hereby adopts and incorporates herein the *Circuit Court for Harford County Covid-19 Phase II Re-Opening Plan* effective June 8, 2020; and it is further

ORDERED, that a copy of this Order shall be disseminated to the members of the Bar Association of Harford County via the Bar Association's website; and it is further

ORDERED, that a copy of this Order shall be posted to website maintained by this Court and to the website maintained by the Clerk of this Court.

June 5, 2020
DATE

ANGELA M. EAVES
Administrative Judge

CIRCUIT COURT FOR HARFORD COUNTY

COVID-19 Court Re-Opening Plan
Phase II: June 8, 2020-July 17, 2020

The Circuit Court for Harford County has the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all individuals entering the Courthouse.[1] This includes Courthouse employees and occupants, attorneys, litigants, and visitors. In light of this responsibility and in accordance with the Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations issued May 22, 2020 (hereafter "Administrative Order"), this Court will implement the following protective measures and docketing/scheduling priorities effective June 8, 2020. Phase II of the reopening of the Courthouse is expected to last until July 17, 2020.

GENERAL

All persons entering the building must submit to a temperature check with a digital thermometer, must answer screening questions related to COVID-19 symptoms. *See* Attachment A. All persons in the Courthouse must wear a mask/covering to prevent or protect against transmission of the Coronavirus, and must maintain social distancing protocols. Any person who exhibits now known symptoms of the Coronavirus, or who refuses to wear a mask/covering, or does not maintain social distancing protocols, or who does not otherwise follow the safety and security directives of Security Officers will be denied entrance to the Courthouse, or will be required to leave the Courthouse. If, as a result of the screening process a person is denied entry, or is otherwise required to leave the Courthouse, that person will be provided information regarding alternative means to address the purpose of that person's intended visit to the Court. *See* Attachment B.

On a frequent and ongoing basis, the Courthouse will be sanitized to maintain appropriate hygiene/cleaning standards recommended to prevent transmission of the Coronavirus. All public areas of the Courthouse, including courtrooms, also will be marked to promote social distancing. On a case by case basis a judge or magistrate presiding over a hearing may implement any other appropriate precautions to protect against transmission of the Coronavirus in a courtroom.

COURTHOUSE HOURS, CLERK'S OFFICE AVAILABILITY, and OCCUPANCY

1. Access to the Courthouse by the general public will be restricted, and entry by the general public, if permitted, will be limited to the Courtland Street entrance.

2. The Courthouse will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in a manner necessary to effectuate the mission of the Court, which may, at times be limited to only electronic or telephonic access.

    a. The Office of the Clerk shall remain closed to the public with limited exceptions (i.e., filings of emergency matters).

[1] This responsibility is not an admission of liability for tort claims or otherwise on the part of the Court or the Maryland Judiciary.

b. For non-emergency in-person filings, all individuals must use Drop Box located in the vestibule on the Courtland Street entrance to the Courthouse.

c. Individuals required to file papers through the Maryland Electronic Court System (MDEC) may not use the Drop Box, and must use MDEC to file papers with the Court.

3. Court activities shall proceed with restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing, consistent with guidance of the CDC or MDH or both.

4. The number of courtrooms used will be kept to the minimum level necessary to maintain court operations.

5. Visitors to the Courthouse are encouraged to not bring children under the age of 16 into the Courthouse. All individuals entering the Courthouse must wear a mask/covering their nose and mouth, submit to no-contact temperature checks, and answer COVID-19 screening questions.

6. The Self-Help Center will be open for virtual appointments. The Self-Help Center will continue to monitor phone messages remotely and will return calls within 24 hours. Scheduling will be in accordance with the information on the Court's website.

DOCKETING AND SCHEDULING PRIORITIES

During Phase II of the Court reopening process, the Court will resume hearing cases as indicated in the Administrative Order. Accordingly, during Phase II the Court will **not** hear contested cases or those involving witnesses (except in protective order cases). Most cases will be heard remotely to continue to minimize the risks associated with the Coronavirus. Therefore, attorneys and parties will be asked to provide an email address for a remote video hearing for which a computer with a camera will be needed. For those without access to the Internet, telephonic participation will be permitted. Below is a schedule of when certain types of cases will be heard.

DRUG COURT
First and third Monday morning of each month

GUARDIANSHIP (alleged disabled adults, minors, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status)
First and third Monday afternoon of each month, unless emergent

CRIMINAL CASES
Status conferences/pretrial matters—Monday, Wednesday, and/or Friday mornings
Bail reviews/arraignments/agreed criminal pleas—Monday-Friday at 2:30 p.m.
Violations of Probation—pre-designated days each month for each judge

FAMILY CASES
Uncontested divorces—Tuesday mornings (judge); Friday mornings (magistrate)
Default hearings—Tuesday mornings (judge)
Exceptions—Thursday mornings
Protective orders: Temporary orders, when filed; Final orders, 7 days later

Peace order appeals and Extreme risk protective order appeals—Thursday mornings
Emergency—upon review only
Scheduling conferences and status conferences
Magistrate Hart—scheduled throughout the week
Magistrate Hatem–Mondays and Thursdays
Magistrate Walker–Tuesdays and Wednesdays
IV-D child support establishment agreement/paternity admissions - upon request until Phase III

CIVIL CASES (uncontested or argument only)
On the record appeals—Friday afternoons
Civil motions—Thursday mornings
Civil pretrial conferences—Thursday afternoons

JUVENILE CASES
Closed hearings scheduled before the Juvenile Magistrate

REGISTER OF WILLS
Scheduled 2 days a week

CONCLUSION

The Court will strive to hear all matters during Phase II in a safe and efficient manner. All Courthouse employees and occupants, attorneys, litigants, and visitors, are expected to exhibit the utmost degree of civility and patience appropriate to having matters resolved in this public forum. Anything less dishonors the principles upon which our legal system was founded.

_____
DATE

_____
ANGELA M. EAVES,
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE