



Lisa A. Hall Johnson  
Administrative Judge

**DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND**  
Fifth District

Courthouse, Suite 345B  
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772  
(301) 298-4081

Hyattsville District Court Building  
4990 Rhode Island Avenue, Suite 250  
Hyattsville, Maryland 20781  
(301) 298-4220

**DISTRICT COURT COMMUNICATION TO THE BAR AND STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING PHASE V**

March 4, 2022

On March 1, 2022 Chief Judge Getty issued the *Fifth Amended Administrative Order Expanding Statewide Judiciary Operations in Light of the COVID-19 Emergency (the Fifth Amended Order)*.<sup>1</sup> In the *Fifth Amended Order* Administrative Judges of the circuit courts and the District Court in each jurisdiction were required to issue administrative orders to be effective March 7, 2022. A Joint Administrative Order from the Circuit Court for Prince George's County and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Maryland was issued on March 4, 2022. It is attached, for your convenience. In addition, I am providing the below information to summarize how the Prince George's County District Court will implement this return to Phase V.

**COVID-19 PROTOCOLS**

COVID-19 protocols will be relaxed pursuant to the relevant orders. You will no longer be required to complete a screening sheet, although screening questions will be posted for review and consideration to those who seek to enter a courthouse in Prince George's County. In addition, those seeking to enter a courthouse will no longer be required to submit to a temperature check or wear a mask. Social distancing requirements have also been relaxed. However, the District Court Bailiffs and/or the Sheriff's Office have the authority to disburse any crowds, to deny access or remove anyone that should not be in a courthouse pursuant to the *Fifth Amended Order*.

You are always encouraged to wear a mask. You also have the option to create space between you and others if that is your preference. Plexiglass will remain in place for the time being. Hand sanitizer and wipes will remain available.

**GENERAL OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT DOCKETS**

During the pandemic and as we navigated through the phased reopening of the courts, the Prince George's County District Court has consistently received an astounding volume of filings and resolved an equally astounding amount of those matters. We have done so manually, without the benefit of MDEC,

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<sup>1</sup> If you wish to view the Court of Appeals Orders, please visit <https://www.courts.state.md.us/media/news/2022/pr20220218>.

and at times with reduced staffing. For example, for the period to include fiscal years 2019 through 2021, the Prince George's County District Court received more motor vehicle, criminal and civil filings and resolved more of those cases than any other jurisdiction in the state.<sup>2</sup> We have tried to develop innovative ways to handle matters, while being sensitive to COVID concerns and adhering to the applicable administrative orders, statutes, and rules. We will continue to serve our community with the same diligence.

Notice for most District Court matters scheduled to be heard in March and April was circulated prior to the *Fifth Amended Order*. As a result, dockets scheduled for the next few weeks will be held as indicated in the notices that have already been circulated. You will not experience major changes next week, and all impacted parties will be notified of any changes. We will gradually transition to in person dockets for most matters, and we will gradually increase the volume of cases set on each docket.

Due to constraints regarding transport from the Department of Corrections, we are limited in how many cases involving incarcerated defendants we can schedule to be heard in person on any day. We will continue to work with the jail to resume in person preliminary hearings and increase transport for other matters. At this time, initial bail reviews will remain fully remote. However, all courtrooms are open to the public. Requests for remote hearings will be considered if requested in a timely filed motion, or if there is a COVID-19 positive diagnosis or exposure directly impacting counsel, a party, or a witness.

#### **DISTRICT COURT CLERK'S OFFICE**

The District Court Clerk's Office has been open to the public since July 2020. We are not accepting appointments and will assist people as they arrive. However, while we have not experienced long lines or extended wait times, you may be asked to step into the hallway if the lobby becomes too crowded. We will continue to accept filings at the counters and in the District Court drop boxes. Any emergency motions and/or "next day" motions MUST be filed at the counters.

The District Court will continue to communicate with the parties and stakeholders by issuing summonses and trial notices, and by contacting counsel in select matters. If you have additional questions, please contact the Clerk's Office at 301-298-4000 in Upper Marlboro, or 301-298-4200 in Hyattsville.

#### **DISTRICT COURT COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE**

The Commissioner's Office remains open and fully functional.

#### **SUMMARY OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY DISTRICT COURT OPERATIONS**

##### **I. Civil**

- A. Large and small claims scheduled between March 7<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup> will be heard remotely. Large and small claims matters will be heard in person beginning March 14, 2022. Trial notices were sent and reflect this change.
- B. Special set cases scheduled for a date in March will be heard as scheduled. Special set cases scheduled April 4<sup>th</sup> and beyond will be in person. Any matters set in April 2022

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics are publicly available and can be found at <https://www.courts.state.md.us/district/about#stats>.

where the parties have already agreed to a remote trial may remain remote through April. Any other matters set for April 2022 and beyond will be held in person.

- C. HY5 cases will remain remote at this time. Daily HY5 dockets will begin on April 25, 2022.
- D. Housing Code Cases will remain remote for the March 16, 2022 docket and will resume in person hearings for the April 20, 2022 docket.
- E. Tax code cases will remain remote for the March 23, 2022 and April 13, 2022 docket, with the goal to resume in person dockets for the May 25, 2022 docket.
- F. Beginning June 1, 2022, dockets in 162 on Thursday afternoons will no longer be staggered.

## II. Criminal

### A. Trial Dates

- 1. Commissioners will resume providing trial dates on any matter filed with them beginning in June 2022.
- 2. Matters scheduled on the bail review docket will receive a trial date during their bail review hearing.

### B. Criminal trials and all traffic matters will be held on in person dockets.

### C. Preliminary Inquiries and Served/Unserved Summons Dockets

The served and unserved summons dockets have been effective in reducing the backlog of criminal summonses. As a result, in June 2022 preliminary inquiries will resume being heard as they were scheduled prior to the pandemic operations. These matters were scheduled in 261 at 10:30 and during the 10:30 docket in Courtroom 4, and included both served and unserved summonses.

### D. Preliminary Hearings

In the coming weeks we will work with the Department of Corrections and the Office of the Sheriff to resume in person preliminary hearings, fugitive hearings, and hearings on subsequent motions to review bail.

### E. Bail Review

- 1. Bail review will continue to be conducted as a remote docket.
  - a. District 5 will continue to circulate a daily email from the Clerk's Office to counsel who are entered by 10:00 am. This notice will include Zoom information.
  - b. Counsel can still file their line for this docket by emailing [District5Hearings@mdcourts.gov](mailto:District5Hearings@mdcourts.gov) no later than 10:00 the morning of the hearing.
  - c. The Court will provide trial dates to those matters heard on the bail review docket.

2. The Court is reviewing its procedures regarding motions to re-review bail. If there are changes, we will communicate any updates.

#### F. Problem-Solving Courts

##### 1. Mental Health Court

- a. Beginning March 15, 2022 all defendants scheduled on the 2 pm calendar shall appear in person. Remote hearings will be considered by the team, when appropriate.
- b. The 10:30 am morning docket from the detention center shall remain remote until April 5<sup>th</sup>.
- c. New referrals shall be in person appearances in the courtroom on the morning docket.
- d. Zoom lines for both the am and pm docket will remain available. Meetings can be attended by remote service providers and/or counsel should circumstances warrant such an appearance.

##### 2. Adult Drug Court

- a. In person hearings will resume on March 22, 2022.
- b. The Adult Drug Court will consider individual requests to appeal remotely.

#### G. Hybrid Dockets

1. Hybrid dockets have been incredibly successful, and we are periodically expanding these dockets to include different types of cases.
2. We will continue to hold Criminal Hybrid Dockets on Mondays in courtroom 262 in Upper Marlboro and Courtroom 3 in Hyattsville.
3. We will begin a Jailable Traffic Hybrid Docket on May 16, 2022 in Courtroom 263 in Upper Marlboro and Courtroom 4 in Hyattsville. Driving while intoxicated and Driving under the influence matters will not be heard on the Jailable Traffic Hybrid Docket.
4. An Assistant State's Attorney, defense counsel, and the defendant are required to appear in person on Hybrid dockets. Witnesses and officers will appear via Zoom. Courtrooms are open to the public. Observers may appear in person or via audio option. Any cases that can be resolved in the morning will be resolved on the record. All trials will be passed to the afternoon and will be in person. All parties are notified to be available for the entire day.

#### H. Violations of Probation

1. VOPs are scheduled for in person hearings.
2. Motions on domestic violence, peace order, and extreme risk protective order matters will continue to be held on these dockets.

**III. Protective Orders, Peace Orders, Petitions for Emergency Evaluations, and Extreme Risk Protective Orders**

- A. Final hearings and those filing a petition for a temporary order during business hours will continue to be heard in person.
- B. Interim to temporary orders will be heard remotely through March 25, 2022.
- C. Beginning March 28, 2022, hearings on interim to temporary orders will be in person. We will no longer accept evidence through the [District5DV@mdcourts.gov](mailto:District5DV@mdcourts.gov) email address after this date. Litigants and counsel are instructed to bring their evidence to court in a format that can be shared and considered by the presiding judge.

**IV. Landlord and Tenant**

All landlord and tenant matters will be in person. We are increasing the volume of cases set on these dockets as well. We will continue to monitor these dockets and adjust as necessary.

**V. Other Matters**

The District Court is resuming in person hearings, unless otherwise specified. Parking, tolls, school bus violations, and other matters will be heard on in person dockets. If you have a question about your hearing, please contact the Clerk's Office.

**CONCLUSION**

We have finally reached the time where our community is enjoying life with fewer restrictions. Still, while the mandates have been lifted, personal choice should guide your conduct and masking is supported for those who choose to wear them.

I express my sincere gratitude to every Prince George's County District Court employee. I have consistently acknowledged the efforts of the District Court team because our employees continue to exhibit the utmost professionalism and diligence even when faced with difficult circumstances and a frustrated public. Not even the pandemic has stopped the District Court for Prince George's County from striving each day to provide fair and efficient service to our community. I am proud of the efforts of every employee of the District Court and members of our bar.

I also want to express my appreciation to the members of the bar. Your lives and your work have been impacted by the pandemic and the various phased operation of the courts. My hope is that these changes signal a trend towards moving and resolving even more matters. As always, I am open to your feedback.

Regards,

  
Lisa A. Hall Johnson

**Joint Administrative Order from the Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Maryland**

**WHEREAS**, due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, an emergency exists; and

**WHEREAS**, the administration of justice necessarily has been affected by the pandemic and will continue to require the professionalism, courtesy, and cooperation of the members of the bench, the bar and judiciary staff in navigating the changes to practices and procedures; and

**WHEREAS**, remote hearings have proved to be useful and effective in facilitating the Courts' performance of core functions during the COVID-19 emergency and may continue; and

**WHEREAS**, COVID-19 continues to require the Courts in Prince George's County to monitor the current phase of operations in the phased approach, moving toward full operational functions, while employing safety measures and monitoring local health conditions to continue to support the health and safety of the residents of Prince George's County and the Judiciary personnel; and

**WHEREAS**, the Court of Appeals Amended Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to the COVID-19 Emergency, filed June 3, 2020, provided for five phases of a progressive return to operations; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Executive of Prince George's County issued Executive Order No. 2-2022 on February 25, 2022, terminating the Mask Mandate in Public Places in Prince George's County effective February 28, 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, infection rates have now fallen across the state allowing for the return to operations in Phase V. The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, Joseph M. Getty has issued the Fifth Amended Administrative Order (March 1, 2022) further clarifying the Phase V reopening of the Courts in Maryland, while authorizing all courts effective March 7, 2022 to: require the wearing of face masks and mandate social distancing to be voluntary under certain circumstances as defined in said Order, and directing the Administrative Judges of the Circuit Court and the District Court located in each county to determine together whether they will require social distancing or other health measures consistent with local conditions and pursuant to appropriate public health guidance and shall so advise the public and members of the bar by way of administrative orders to be effective March 7, 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, after consultation with Dr. Ernest Carter, Health Officer for Prince George's County, Maryland, the Administrative Judges of the Circuit and District Courts of this County have determined that some COVID-19 restrictions can be relaxed as we proceed into the Phase V reopening subject to the limitations contained in this Order, as the infection rate of COVID-19 in Prince George's County has been significantly reduced; and under consideration of the above and for good cause shown,

It is this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2022, hereby

**ORDERED**, that effective March 7, 2022, pending further order of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals or the Administrative Judges for the Circuit Court for Prince George's County and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Maryland, temperature checks and written/electronic health screening questionnaires will no longer be required when entering either the Circuit or District Courts in Prince George's County, Maryland; and it is further,

**ORDERED**, the social distancing requirements shall be relaxed, but the Circuit Court and the District Court may require continued restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing as necessary; and it is further

**ORDERED**, to achieve social distancing for large congregate settings, the Administrative Judges may limit, temporarily, the number of people entering the Courthouse or a courtroom to the extent necessary. The Courts shall be open to the public, and no appointment shall be necessary for access; however, notices shall specify that appointments may be preferred for some services, and that access to courtrooms and other Court spaces may be limited on an intermittent basis; and it is further,

**ORDERED**, that masks shall not be mandated but shall be strongly encouraged in the Courthouses in Prince George's County, Maryland; and it is further

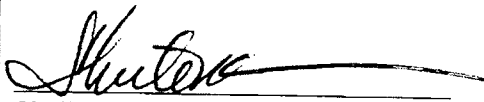
**ORDERED**, that self-screening questions shall be posted on the exterior of the Courthouses in Prince George's County and the Office of the Sheriff, at the discretion of the Administrative Judges of the Circuit Court and District Court, may restrict access to any person who may self-assert symptoms of the COVID-19 virus; and it is further,

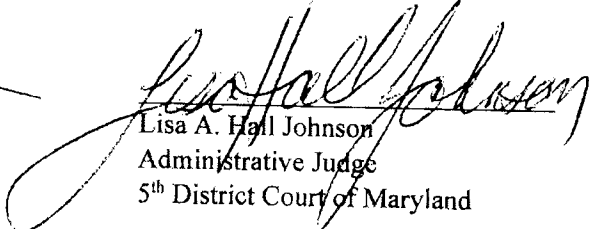
**ORDERED**, that if a citizen, staff or member of the bar is denied entry based on the self-assessment screening protocol, they shall be provided with information to contact the Court regarding alternative means to address the purpose of their intended visit to the Court; and it is further,

**ORDERED**, that the Sheriff's Office and/or the Bailiffs shall DENY entry to and/or remove any individual who refuses to comply with or violates this Order; and it is further,

**ORDERED**, that this Administrative Order shall be posted at the entrance of the Courthouses, on the website for the Circuit Court for Prince George's County and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Maryland, and provided to the Prince George's County Bar Association and other Specialty Bar Associations in the County for distribution to their members; and, it is further,

**ORDERED**, that this Order shall become effective on March 7, 2022, at 7:00am and shall remain in effect until further Order of this Court.

  
Sheila R. Tillerson Adams  
Chief and Administrative Judge  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County

  
Lisa A. Hall Johnson  
Administrative Judge  
5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Maryland