



**Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair**  
*Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland*

**Matthew Barrett**  
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Court  
Administrators*

**Hon. Bibi M. Berry**  
*Circuit Court for Montgomery County*

**Hon. Wayne A. Brooks**  
*District Court of Maryland  
Howard County*

**Hon. Yvette M. Bryant**  
*Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of  
Practice and Procedure*

**Hon. Debra J. Burch**  
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks*

**Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin**  
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges*

**Hon. Heather S. DeWees**  
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks*

**Nancy Faulkner**  
*Secretary, Deputy State Court Administrator*

**Maria Fields**  
*Administrative Clerk, District 8  
Baltimore County*

**Hon. Fred S. Hecker**  
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges*

**Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer**  
*District Court of Maryland  
Baltimore City*

**Hon. James A. Kenney, III**  
*Chair, Senior Judges Committee*

**Hon. Stacy A. Mayer**  
*Circuit Court for Baltimore County*

**Hon. John P. Morrissey**  
*Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland*

**Hon. Harris P. Murphy**  
*Circuit Court for Kent County*

**Kara Pollak**  
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court  
Administrators*

**Judy Rupp**  
*State Court Administrator*

**Rebecca Sloane**  
*Administrative Clerk, District 3  
Cecil County*

**Hon. Shaèm C. P. Spencer**  
*District Court of Maryland  
Anne Arundel County*

**Roberta Warnken**  
*Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland*

**Hon. E. Greg Wells**  
*Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland*

# MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

## MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes  
November 18, 2025

### Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair	Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer
Matthew Barrett	Hon. James A. Kenney, III
Hon. Bibi M. Berry	Hon. John P. Morrissey
Hon. Yvette M. Bryant	Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Hon. Debra J. Burch	Kara Pollak
Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin	Judy Rupp
Hon. Heather S. DeWees	Rebecca Sloane
Nancy Faulkner	Hon. Shaèm C.P. Spencer
Maria Fields	Roberta Warnken
Hon. Fred S. Hecker	

### Guests:

Richard Barton	Andrew Ortiz
Hon. Kathleen L. Beckstead	Hon. Laura S. Ripken
Hon. Jonathan Biran	Hon. Thomas J. Pryal
Ksenia Boitsova	Dominique Johnigan Simmons
Shamika Dent-Williams	Hon. Michael W. Siri
Andrea Murphy	Nisa Subasinghe
Pamela Ortiz	Jamie Walter

## 1. Welcome – Hon. Matthew J. Fader

Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. He recognized that the annual New Trial Judge Orientation (NTJO) Residential Program was being held this week.

## 2. Approval of Minutes of the September 17, 2025, Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded and, after hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

## 3. Executive Committee Updates

### a. Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Judge Fred S. Hecker provided an update on the Conference of Circuit Judges. The Conference met on November 17, 2025, during which Justice Angela M. Eaves presented an overview of the Innovations in Tiered Legal Services Task Force. Justice Eaves asked members to solicit volunteers for a focus group that will provide feedback on recommendations to address the civil legal needs of individuals who need legal assistance but cannot afford an attorney.

The Conference continues to discuss the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program legislation that will go into effect on July 1, 2026. Two conference members serve on an advisory panel on AOT implementation, which also includes representatives from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). Additionally, conference members provided public comments on the MDH's proposed draft regulations related to AOT.

### b. Judy K. Rupp, Administrative Office of the Courts

State Court Administrator Judy Rupp announced that the [\*Strategic Plan for the Maryland Judiciary 2025-2030\*](#) digital flipbook has been published on CourtNet as a companion to the Operational Plan dashboard.

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) leadership established an AOC Artificial Intelligence (AI) Workgroup to coordinate and implement AI initiatives within the AOC.

Judicial Information Systems (JIS) launched a new email security tool that will automatically move solicitation emails into a “Promotions” folder and reduce spam. The Non-Case Revenue System (NCRS) project is being rolled out to circuit courts, with project completion expected in 2026. The MDEC upgrade, EJ2024, will be implemented on February 13-16, 2026. Virtual training will begin

on January 5, 2026, and Q&A webinars will be available in early February. A support structure has been established to assist courts during the transition.

The Judiciary Human Resources Division's Office of Information Privacy has transitioned its data privacy tool to DeleteMe. Existing users of Leo Web Protect will be automatically moved to the new tool.

In October 2022, the Office of Legal Affairs and Fair Practices began the extensive process to trademark "The People's Law Library" and "The People's Law Library of Maryland." This month, the United States Patent and Trademark Office accepted the applications and registered the trademarks for the State Law Library.

The Access to Justice Department, in collaboration with the Appellate Court of Maryland, published a new five-part video series on Appeals to the Appellate Court of Maryland. The Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office published the [\*Remote Mediation and Disability Report\*](#), and the Office of Problem-Solving Courts published the [\*Fiscal Year 2025 Problem-Solving Courts Annual Report\*](#).

The Research and Analysis Department completed the statewide Tier 1 Facility Security reassessments, conducted focus groups on tiered legal services, and launched the Employee Experiences Survey. The department continues to prepare for the upcoming Judiciary-wide launch of the Pending Cases Dashboard.

### **Conferences, Summits, and Programs:**

Access to Justice hosted the Annual Maryland Court Help Center Provider Conference on October 14, 2025.

The Equal Justice Committee held a Community Forum on Juvenile Justice on October 29, 2025.

Juvenile and Family Services held the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Child Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency Options (CANDO) Conference on October 27-29, 2025.

The Committee on Complex Litigation hosted the Annual Business and Technology Case Management Symposium on November 4, 2025.

The Maryland Statewide Steering Committee on Behavioral Health and the Justice System met on October 27, 2025, and established workgroups focused on improving behavioral health responses within the justice system.

Research and Analysis hosted a two-day Data Excellence Summit to define issues in data quality, data reportability, and data standardization, and identify practical solutions and next steps.

**c. Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Supreme Court of Maryland**

Chief Justice Fader announced that the Supreme Court of Maryland (SCM) will hold bar admissions ceremonies this week, during which approximately 450 new lawyers are scheduled to be admitted.

The SCM successfully launched an online application process for the Character Committees, which are composed of volunteer Maryland attorneys who review the character and fitness of applicants seeking admission to the Maryland Bar.

**d. Hon. John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland**

Chief Judge John P. Morrissey announced the opening of the Mabel H. Hubbard Baltimore City District Courthouse building, named in honor of Judge Hubbard, the first black woman to serve on a Maryland court. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for November 25, 2025.

District Court executive leadership participated in a two-day leadership training, which is held every three years. Chief Judge Morrissey was named chair of the Diversion Subcommittee under the Maryland Statewide Steering Committee on Behavioral Health. The subcommittee held its initial organization meeting and is scheduled to meet, again, on December 3, 2025.

The Justice Reinvestment Oversight Board is conducting an in-depth study of pretrial services in Maryland. Workgroups have been formed to review the private home detention system, the processes and procedures for handling detainees, and the potential statewide standardization of pretrial levels.

**4. Artificial Intelligence Workgroup Proposal – Hon. Jonathan Biran**

Justice Jonathan Biran proposed to the Council that the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Workgroup be converted into the AI Governance Subcommittee. The workgroup was originally formed as an ad hoc group to address projects on an as-needed basis. The proposed subcommittee would serve as a proactive body tasked with setting a strategic direction for AI in the Judiciary, developing policies on the use of AI and generative AI, monitoring compliance with those policies, and providing input on AI-related procurements. It will also establish subgroups to address AI topics related to education, policy, and ethics.

The current workgroup membership will transition to the proposed subcommittee, with additional members to be added. It will remain under the Special Projects Committee.

A motion was made and seconded to convert the AI Workgroup into the AI Governance Subcommittee. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council.

## **5. Court Access Committee Proposals**

### **a. VRI Policy – Hon. Michael W. Siri**

Judge Michael W. Siri, on behalf of the Court Access Committee, proposed that the Council adopt the Use of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Policy to encourage courts to provide a video remote interpreter when it is determined to be efficient, cost-effective, and sufficient to meet the needs of the proceeding. Judge Siri noted that courts are already equipped to use remote interpreters through a Zoom session via Polycom or on a laptop.

Judge Siri explained that the use of remote interpreters would benefit the administration of justice by enabling courts to provide interpreters for brief, routine, and emergency proceedings; provide interpreters quickly and efficiently to rural jurisdictions; and provide interpreters for rare languages. Additionally, using remote interpreters would reduce travel-related costs and decrease the hourly guarantee for interpreters from four hours to two hours.

An issue was raised regarding obtaining Zoom licenses for all courtroom staff. Judge Siri suggested that the hearing judge or another staff member who has a Zoom license log in to the account on behalf of courtroom staff. It was asked whether court staff would schedule remote interpreters through Access to Justice, as they do with in-person interpreters. Ms. Ortiz responded that interpreter coordinators would handle the scheduling. Ms. Boitsova added that Access to Justice has a staff remote interpreter coordinator available to assist judges and court staff with issues that may arise in open court.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the VRI Policy. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council.

### **b. AIRA Access Partner – Hon. Michael W. Siri**

On behalf of the Court Access Committee, Judge Siri proposed that the Council authorize the AOC to explore the Judiciary becoming an AIRA access partner. AIRA is a mobile application that provides visual interpretation service to persons with blindness, helping them to navigate physical locations using the camera function on their phone. As an access partner, the Judiciary would fund users' AIRA sessions in court locations.

Pamela Ortiz noted that the application uses geofencing to identify court locations. When asked whether the vendor or users would have access to detailed

floor plans of courthouse locations, she clarified that geofencing identifies a general location only and does not provide detailed building plans.

Judge Bryant asked whether any security issues had been identified in other courts that are access partners. Ms. Ortiz explained that the Colorado court system is an AIRA access partner and that she spoke with a coordinator there, who reported no security concerns. Judge Brooks inquired whether the application can be used through Meta glasses. Ms. Ortiz responded that, if the Judiciary is approved to explore becoming an access partner, they would investigate whether the application can be used via Meta glasses. Additionally, if the Judiciary becomes a partner, policies would be implemented, including prohibiting recording of sessions, setting time limits for sessions, and allowing use in courtrooms only with the court's knowledge and permission.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the AOC to explore becoming an AIRA access partner. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council.

## **6. Domestic Law Committee Proposals**

### **a. Committee Name Change – Nancy Faulkner and Nisa Subasinghe**

Nancy Faulkner and Nisa Subasinghe proposed to the Council that the Domestic Law Committee be renamed the Family Law Committee. Ms. Faulkner explained that the name change would better reflect the committee's mission, which focuses on family law processes; align with terminology used in the Maryland Rules, Maryland Code, and the Family Law Article; and be consistent with terminology used within the Judiciary. The chair and members of the committee support the proposal. Judge Hengerer asked whether the Domestic Violence and Peace Order Subcommittee name would remain the same. Ms. Faulkner confirmed that the subcommittee name would not change.

A motion was made and seconded to rename the Domestic Law Committee as the Family Law Committee. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council.

### **b. Guardianship Statutory Revision Workgroup – Nisa Subasinghe**

Ms. Subasinghe, on behalf of the Family Law Committee (formerly, "Domestic Law Committee"), proposed the creation of a Guardianship Statutory Revision Workgroup under the Committee. If approved, the workgroup would be chaired by Senior Judge Joseph M. Getty, with membership including judicial officers, private practitioners, and representatives from the Maryland Departments of Aging and Human Services, and the disability rights community.

The goal of the workgroup will be to review the current guardianship statutes and court rules in consideration of the 2017 version of the Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship and Other Protective Arrangements Act. The workgroup's final product will be proposed legislation that updates and refines Maryland's guardianship statutes. The workgroup's expected duration is three years.

A motion was made and seconded for the creation of the Guardianship Statutory Revision Workgroup. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the recommendation of the Council

## 7. Committee Updates

### a. Education Committee – Hon. Laura S. Ripken

Judge Laura S. Ripken, joined by Shamika Dent-Williams, presented updates from the Education Committee. From October 2024 to September 2025, the Committee and the Judicial College offered 1,028 learning opportunities to a total of 16,340 learners. Judge Ripken highlighted the significant increase in self-paced distance learning, which rose from 410 opportunities in the last reporting year to 718 this year, reflecting the Judiciary's commitment to providing shorter, more accessible learning options.

Judge Ripken provided updates and highlighted notable achievements from each of the committee's nine subcommittees during the reporting year. Key accomplishments include:

- The Judicial Education Subcommittee hosted the annual Judicial Conference in April 2025.
- The Magistrate Education Subcommittee finalized the Magistrate Bench Book, which will be published in 2026.
- The Professional Education Subcommittee co-hosted an Expungement Forum with the Technology Education Subcommittee, focused on legislative updates and review of expungement processes.
- The Technology Education Subcommittee, in partnership with the Judicial Education Subcommittee, live-streamed selected Judicial Conference content.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Education Subcommittee supported the offering of the online course, *Judicial Education — Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*.

Judge Ripken requested that the Council approve the transition of the Public Education and Community Outreach Subcommittee from the Education Committee to the Special Projects Committee. She noted that the Education Committee's primary focus remains on internal education initiatives and resources. Because the subcommittee's goals are external-facing and will extend beyond the upcoming year, the committee recommends the transition to the Special Projects Committee to support the subcommittee's continued success.

A motion was made and seconded to transition the Public Education and Community Outreach Subcommittee from the Education Committee to the Special Projects Committee. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader approved the Council's recommendation.

**b. Court Operations Committee – Hon. Kathleen L. Beckstead**

Judge Kathleen L. Beckstead, joined by Jamie Walter, Dominique Johnigan Simmons, and Andrew Ortiz, presented on the Court Operations Committee. The committee oversees the Case Management Subcommittee, the Forms Subcommittee, and the Jury Use and Management Subcommittee, as well as five workgroups.

In 2025, the committee implemented three changes to trial court time standards, launched a public-facing dashboard that displays case processing performance, produced and launched two informational videos about jury service geared towards the public, and explored the use of AI for case scheduling and workflow efficiency. In 2026, the committee will prepare for the FY 2026 Caseflow Assessment, finalize District Court caseflow time standards reports, gather feedback from courts on AI tools to streamline operations, and continue coordinating with the AI Governance Subcommittee (formerly, "AI Workgroup") for responsible innovation.

Ms. Walter, Ms. Simmons, and Mr. Ortiz presented the FY 2025 Caseflow Assessment. In FY 2025, the District Court exceeded the goal of 98% of cases terminated within standard in traffic 21-902 and traffic must appear case types, both of which were at 99% within standard. The criminal, traffic payable, civil large, and civil small case types were at 97%, 93%, 97%, and 90%, respectively. Ms. Simmons highlighted the steady improvement in the overall percentage of cases terminated within standard since FY 2019.

Mr. Ortiz presented the circuit courts' assessment and highlighted the improvement in performance in criminal, civil general, family, CINA, and TPR case types. Chief Justice Fader inquired about the significant increase in the distribution of over-standard CINA shelter cases from FY 2024 to FY 2025. Mr. Ortiz explained that it could be related to data quality issues reported by court staff; for example, adjudicatory hearings with results marked 'other' could skew the data. Research and Analysis is exploring potential improvements to the assessment review process to ensure accurate data collection. Additionally, court staff reported a substantial number of postponements in these cases due to attorney availability and timely service of parties.

Mr. Ortiz reviewed the Appellate Court assessment. The court met its goal to dispose of 90% of criminal and civil appeals cases within nine months from argument or submission on brief. He noted that the court experienced a 24%



increase in the volume of civil appeals in FY 2025. Regarding the special case time standards for child access, guardianship, CINA, and TPR cases, 60% of cases are within the first standard, which is 120 days from the filing of the record to argument held, and 98.3% are within the second standard, which is 60 days from argument or submission on brief to disposition. For appeals from the pretrial suppression of evidence cases, the court is 100% within standard for disposition within 120 days from the filing of the record.

Ms. Simmons reviewed the Supreme Court assessment, which showed that all case types during the 2024 Term were 100% within standard.

The committee requested approval of the *JIS Jury Management Operating Directive*, which formalizes the duties and areas of oversight of the Judicial Council, the Jury Use and Management Subcommittee, the Jury Operations Roundtable, and Judicial Information Systems as they pertain to the State's jury program. Judge Hecker requested that the Conference of Circuit Judges be given the opportunity to review the directive before the Council votes. The item will be carried forward to the January 28, 2026, meeting for further consideration.

**c. Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee – Hon. Thomas J. Pryal**

Judge Pryal, joined by Gray Barton, presented on the Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee. The committee ensures the utilization of best practices for specialty courts and dockets and monitors the evaluation and delivery of evidence-based training, technical assistance, research, funding, and support. The committee oversees the Behavioral Health Subcommittee and the Problem-Solving Court Subcommittee, as well as the Truancy Court Workgroup, the Workgroup on Legislation, and the Problem-Solving Court Risk/Need Pilot Program Workgroup.

In 2025, the committee expanded mentorship opportunities for problem-solving court judges and magistrates, recommended the implementation of five new problem-solving courts, and administered a Procedural Fairness Survey designed to assess participants' perceptions of fairness of their interactions with team members of adult treatment courts.

Judge Pryal, on behalf of the committee, proposed a restructuring of the Committee. The proposed structure will consist of two subcommittees, the Problem-Solving Courts Subcommittee and the Judicial Outreach Subcommittee, and five workgroups: Special Projects, Legislative, Universal Screening, Problem-Solving Court Risk/Need Pilot Program, and Truancy. The proposed restructure also proposes moving the Behavioral Health Subcommittee under the Special Projects Committee.

A motion was made and seconded to restructure the Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee as proposed and to move the Behavioral Health Subcommittee under

the Special Projects Committee. The motion passed unanimously, and Chief Justice Fader accepted the Council's recommendation.

**8. For the Good of the Order**

Chief Justice Fader recognized Matthew Barrett, Heather S. DeWees, and Rebecca Sloane for their dedication and service as they conclude their terms on the Judicial Council.

No additional matters were raised, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.