

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

Annual Report 2023

At the close of every year, the Delaware Judicial Branch takes time to reflect on the past year and assess the progress that we have made, as individual courts and collectively as a branch, in fulfilling our mission to provide access to fair and effective justice for all. Our Annual Report gives us the opportunity to share important information with our partners in the other branches of government and with the public. Each Presiding Judge's message details the key accomplishments of their respective courts in 2023 and identifies areas for future growth and improvement.

This past year, the Administrative Office of the Courts, which includes the Judicial Information Center, Office of State Court Collections Enforcement, and the Law Libraries, advanced our mission of service to the courts through several milestone achievements, including:

- Unifying all Judicial Branch employees under a single, consistent system for personnel administration and updating our Judicial Branch Personnel Rules for clarity and fairness;
- Graduating our first cohort of branch employees who participated in a yearlong supervisor training program;
- Upgrading technology solutions in nearly half of all Judicial Branch courtrooms and completing the discovery phase of our statewide electronic filing and case management project for all of our courts;
- Coordinating multiple building and renovation projects throughout the state to ensure our courts have safe and adequate facilities;
- Advancing initiatives arising from our 2022 Bench and Bar Diversity Project, including
 - Offering enhanced diversity training for judges and staff;
 - Hosting more than 20 summer interns as part of the Department of State's Future Leaders internship initiative;
 - Supporting the renewal of the mission of the Delaware Law-Related Education Center and its expanded civics program offerings for K-12 students;
 - Strengthening Judicial Branch partnerships with local universities and law schools, as well as the local Leadership Council for Legal Diversity, to help build more accessible pathways to careers in the law;
- Working with partners from the other branches of government as part of the Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group created by House Bill 244 to evaluate future opportunities to help eliminate the disparate impact on marginalized communities caused by criminal justice fees and fines;
- Collaborating with the Department of Health and Social Services to host a two-day Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Integration Summit that brought together more than 500 legal, law enforcement, and social service professionals and community members to address behavioral health issues in the criminal justice system; and
- With assistance from the National Center for State Courts and the State Justice Institute, leading the first Judicial Branch-wide strategic campaign to assess the state of the Delaware courts in the view of our 1400 employees and to align our courts' collective strategic vision for the future.

I hope this Report is a useful resource in helping to explain and demystify the work of the Delaware Judicial Branch. For more information, please visit the branch's website at <https://courts.delaware.gov>, where you will always find the most up-to-date information about the Delaware Courts.



Gayle P. Lafferty
State Court Administrator

