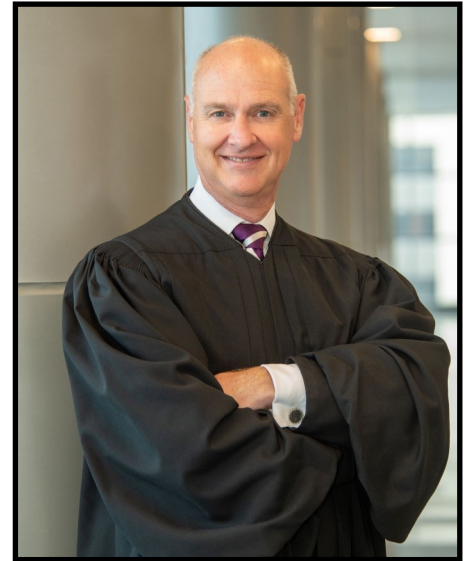


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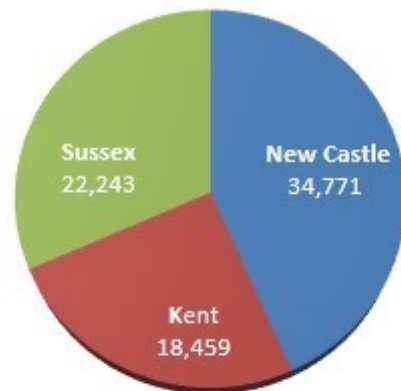
CHIEF JUDGE CARL C. DANBERG



The Court of Common Pleas plays a vital role in providing the citizens of Delaware equal justice under the law. The court is proud to report that access to justice is strong in the First State. Fiscal Year 2022 presented considerable operational challenges as the court returned to full operation in the wake of the global pandemic. Thanks to the hard work and perseverance of its dedicated staff, the court continued to serve as a neutral forum for the efficient resolution of cases. Despite unprecedented staffing shortages, pressure to manage a growing caseload, and the challenges inherent to social distancing requirements, court staff rose to the challenge and demonstrated their commitment to the administration of justice. Not only did the staff fulfil their responsibilities with regards to new incoming cases, they rolled up their sleeves and worked together to develop strategies to triage the seemingly insurmountable backlog of cases accumulated during the pandemic. I remain confident that the Court of Common Pleas is well poised to handle new challenges in the years to come.

FY 22 was a year of significant progression in the Court of Common Pleas. The court continued to provide meaningful access to justice by investing resources in the development and implementation of new procedures to safely conduct in-person court proceedings. The court maximized its limited resources to facilitate timely disposition of criminal cases, balancing the need for efficiency with careful judicial oversight. In addition, the court conducted an analysis of its civil case management

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS BY COUNTY FISCAL YEAR 2022



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procedures to identify opportunities to improve and streamline the civil litigation experience.

In FY 22, the Court of Common Pleas was provided funding for a new Commissioner and was honored to welcome Gregory R. Babowal to serve as Commissioner in Kent County. Commissioner Babowal's appointment has allowed the court to assign Commissioner Donald Bucklin to Sussex County on a full-time basis. This has enabled the court to continue to manage its growing caseload, particularly with regards to the individualized treatment court needs.

Statistical Overview

The Court of Common Pleas has continued to be one of the busiest courts in the State of Delaware with over 90,178 total case filings in FY 22 – an increase of 19.4% over FY 21.

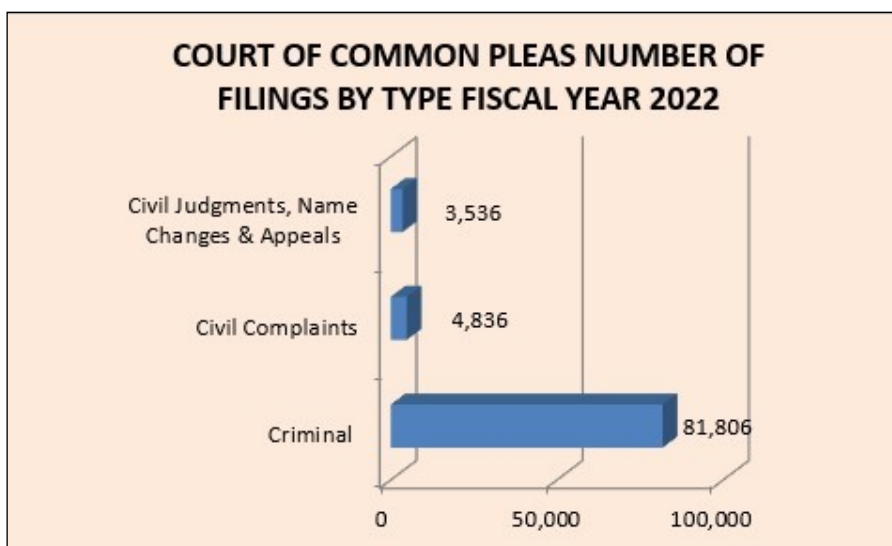
The Court of Common Pleas saw a marginal decrease in total civil case filings, down 3.8% from FY 21, due to a decrease in consumer debt cases. However, the court's civil workload continued to increase as the cases filed were more complex, with appeals and non-consumer debt cases increasing by 13.3% over FY 21. In addition, due in part to the court's concerted efforts to efficiently address its backlog of cases, the number of dispositions entered in civil cases increased by 39.2% over FY 21.

Criminal case filings increased significantly in FY 22. A total of 81,806 misdemeanor criminal cases were filed in the Court of Common Pleas, and 7,745 cases were before the court for a preliminary hearing. These figures represent a 22.6% increase in criminal misdemeanor filings and a 3% increase in total criminal caseload compared to FY 21. Addi-

tionally, the growth rate of more complex criminal cases, such as drug and alcohol cases, has consistently outpaced other criminal filings. Statewide DUI cases increased 71% – growing from 1,970 to 3,368 – between FY 13 and FY 22. In Sussex County, the portion of the court's caseload consisting of misdemeanor drug cases has doubled, from 5% of the county's total caseload to 11%, between FY 12 and FY 22.

The Court of Common Pleas Mediation Program continues to distinguish itself as a valuable resource for criminal disputants, civil litigants, and the community at large. It provides a forum for justice

through negotiated resolution and acceptance of responsibility, rather than prosecution. In FY 22 there were 1,301 cases referred for mediation statewide, and the Program boasted an impressive statewide success/satisfaction rate of 95%.



Problem-Solving Courts

The Court of Common Pleas is proud of its problem-solving courts which provide court-monitored treatment and access to social services designed to minimize the likelihood of reoffending.

Drug Diversion Program

The Court of Common Pleas continues to operate its highly successful court-supervised Drug Diversion Program, headed by Judge Robert Surles in New Castle County and Judge Kenneth Clark in Sussex County. The Drug Diversion Program represents a collaborative effort between the court, its justice partners, and the Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC). Collaboration with PHMC provides observation, research, and data analysis, which has

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assisted in launching scores of other drug diversion programs throughout the United States and internationally. The Drug Diversion Program has served 9,158 individuals since its inception in 1998, and the program is continuing to grow and adapt, incorporating national best practices. In FY 23, the Court of Common Pleas will expand Drug Diversion to Kent County and will standardize Drug Court procedures across all three counties.

DUI Treatment Court Program

The Court of Common Pleas continues to operate the statewide DUI Treatment Court Program, under the direction of Judge Monica A. Horton in New Castle County, Commissioner Gregory Babow-

al in Kent County, and Commissioner Donald Bucklin in Sussex County. Since its inception in December 2014, 366 individuals have entered the Program, with 267 having successfully completing the program. There were 67 active participants in FY 22.

The DUI program is authorized under 21 *Del. C.* § 4177 (d) (2). Its goal is to enhance community safety through the promotion of lifestyle changes with specialized treatment provided by the designated treatment provider and community supervision under the direction of the Department of Corrections. The Program encourages its participants by reminding them that life does not get better by chance, it gets better by CHANGE.

Wilmington Community Court

The Wilmington Community Court seeks to reduce crime and recidivism by addressing the quality-of-life issues facing its communities, and utilizing a restorative justice approach. Since opening in the Fall of 2019, Community Court has served 416 participants, offering those charged with certain misdemeanors the chance to complete alternative mandates to the traditional jail time or fines. A Community Resource Center is located on the second floor of the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wil-

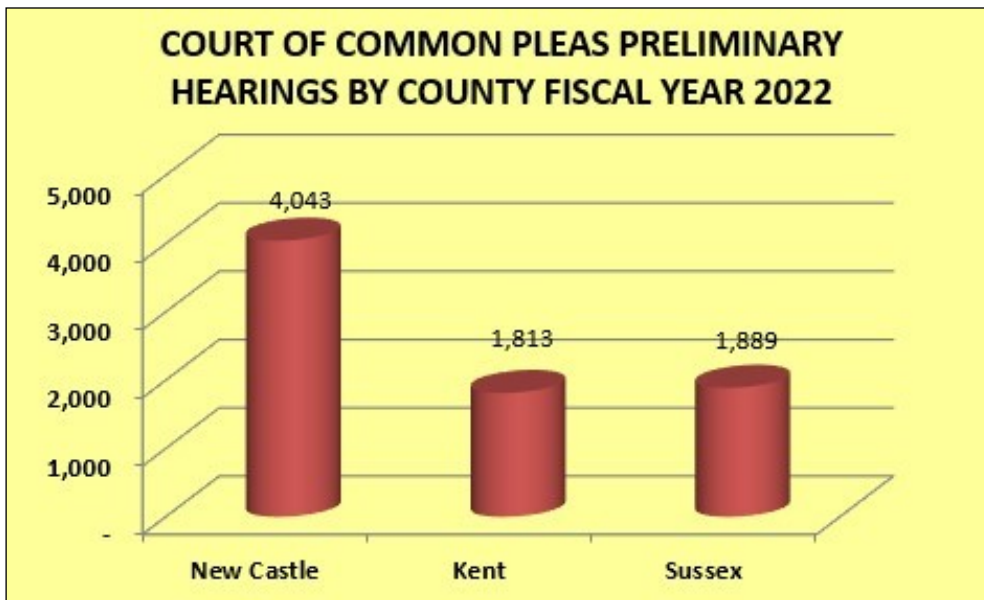
mington. It is open to any member of the public and serves as a mechanism to connect individuals with a variety of social service providers.

One goal of the Community Court is to have offenders invest in the communities they have harmed

through criminal behavior. To better understand the needs of those communities, and to facilitate community service, in FY 23 the Community Court will partner with a downtown community center.

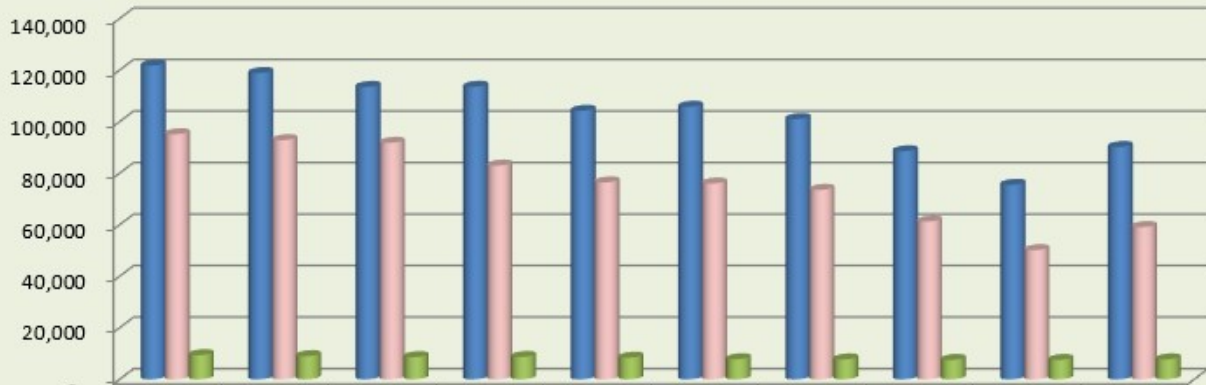
Conclusion

The Court of Common Pleas continues to successfully operate a busy, high-volume court despite limited resources. Thanks to its dedicated staff, the Court of Common Pleas perseveres in its mission “to provide a neutral forum for the people and institutions of Delaware in the resolution of everyday problems, disputes, and more complex legal matters in a fair, professional, efficient and practical manner.” ♦



COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

**COURT OF COMMON PLEAS CIVIL & CRIMINAL FILINGS,
DISPOSITIONS & PRELIMINARY HEARINGS BY FISCAL YEAR**



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Filings	121,752	118,864	113,471	113,547	104,205	105,796	100,995	88,519	75,473	90,178
Dispositions	95,102	92,834	91,781	82,939	76,435	76,012	73,535	61,250	50,155	59,098
Preliminary Hearings	9,398	9,011	8,621	8,689	8,402	7,798	7,739	7,520	7,521	7,745



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COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS JUDGES/ COMMISSIONERS OF NEW CASTLE COUNTY



Back Row (left to right): Commissioner Emily Ferrell, Judge Bradley V. Manning, Chief Judge Carl C. Danberg, Judge Robert H. Surles.

Front Row (left to right): Judge Katharine L. Mayer, Judge Monica A. Horton.

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COURT OF COMMON PLEAS JUDGES/ COMMISSIONERS OF KENT COUNTY



Left to right: Judge Anne E. Hartnett, Judge Kathleen K. Amalfitano.



Commissioner Gregory R. Babowal.

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COURT OF COMMON PLEAS JUDGES/ COMMISSIONERS OF SUSSEX COUNTY



Left to right: Judge Rae M. Mims, Judge Kenneth S. Clark, Jr.



Commissioner Donald R. Bucklin.