

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF MARYLAND  
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER AS TO THE MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE  
COMMISSION

WHEREAS, The Maryland Judiciary is committed to equality, fairness and integrity in the judicial process, which it affirms by supporting a broad range of programs that enhance the legal services delivery system, in an effort to increase access to representation and other forms of legal assistance; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland judicial system is established upon the principle that justice be accessible to all, and where it is in the interest of all Maryland attorneys, stakeholders, legal services providers and the general public that the principle of equal justice be advanced in our State; and

WHEREAS, There is a lack of public understanding of the civil justice system or the civil legal services delivery system, with negative implications for access to justice; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Judiciary acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that in Maryland, the unmet legal needs of low and moderate income persons who face a range of barriers in accessing the courts, seeking legal assistance or otherwise trying to solve legal problems are addressed, and that courts recognize the importance of access to the civil justice system for all in maintaining a just and civil society; and

WHEREAS, The Conference of Chief Justices, in 2001, adopted Resolution 23 recognizing that the Judicial Branch “shoulders primary responsibility to preserve and protect equal justice and take action to ensure access to the justice system for those facing impediments that they are unable to surmount on their own,” and urging members of the

Conference to establish partnerships, in their respective states, with state and local bar organizations, legal service providers and others to address access to justice issues; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, a Work Group on Self-Representation in the Maryland Courts was established and charged with planning a strategic and integrated response to the needs of self-represented litigants; and

WHEREAS, In August 2007, the Work Group completed its work, and recommended, among other proposals, the establishment of an Access to Justice Commission to coordinate the Maryland Judiciary's efforts to improve access to justice for self-represented litigants and those of limited means; and

WHEREAS, In the fall of 2008, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals adopted the Work Group's recommendations and established the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, charging it with the responsibility of addressing existing barriers to access to the courts and legal services in Maryland, and with expanding opportunities for citizens to benefit from the protections, rights and resources that the law provides; and

WHEREAS, The membership of the Commission, which includes leaders from the Judicial, Legislative and Executive Branches of government, the Maryland State Bar Association, legal service providers, faith-based and social service communities, as well as lay persons, was established by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, the functions and duties of the Commission were not, nor was an Administrative Order issued addressing these matters; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate that such Order be issued to memorialize the Commission's existence and functions.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert M. Bell, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and administrative head of the Judicial Branch, pursuant to the authority conferred by Article IV, § 18 of the Maryland Constitution, do hereby order this 18th day of March 2010, effective immediately:

1. Commission.

a. Composition. The Commission shall consist of 45 members appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

b. Chair and Vice Chair. The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals shall designate the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission.

c. Membership. The membership of the Commission, which is subject to modification by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, shall include the following:

Judiciary Participants

(i) The Court of Appeals Judge serving as Chair of the Judicial Institute; Chief Judge of the Court of Special Appeals; Chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges; Chief Judge of the District Court; Chair of the Legislative Committee; Chair of the Family Law Committee; additional Circuit Court and District Court Judges, as appropriate;

(ii) The State Court Administrator; Chair of the Conference of Court Administrators;

(iii) The Chair of the Conference of Circuit Court Clerks; Chief Clerk of the District Court; Coordinator of Commissioner Activities;

(iv) The Family Division Director of a large jurisdiction;

(v) The Executive Director, Judicial Information Systems, AOC; Executive Director, Family Administration, AOC; Executive Director, MACRO; Executive Director, Problem Solving Courts, AOC; Executive Director,

ADR, District Court;

(vi) The Court Information Officer, Office of Communications and Public Affairs;

(vii) The Maryland State Law Librarian; Chair of the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors.

Non-Judiciary Participants

(i) A United States Senator or Congressional Representative or a designee;

(ii) The Governor of Maryland; President of the Maryland Senate; Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, as *ex officio* members;

(iii) The Maryland Attorney General or a designee;

(iv) The Public Defender;

(v) A State's Attorney;

(vi) The President of the Maryland State Bar Association;

(vii) The Dean of the University of Maryland School of Law or a designee;

(viii) The Dean of the University of Baltimore School of Law or a designee;

(ix) The Executive Director of the Governor's Office on Crime Control & Prevention;

(x) The Executive Director, Legal Aid Bureau of Maryland; Executive Director, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service; Executive Director, Maryland Legal Services Corporation; Executive Director, *Pro Bono* Resource Center of Maryland; Executive Director, Women's Law Center of Maryland; Executive Director, Public Justice Center; Executive Director, Alternative Directions; Executive Director, Interfaith Works;

(xi) The President of the League of Women Voters of Maryland;

(xii) A representative from the Maryland Department of Budget and Management;

(xiii) A representative from the Maryland Association of Public Law

Librarians;

(xiv) Two (2) practicing attorneys with a demonstrated commitment to access to justice issues.

d. Term. The Commission will be established for an initial term of (3) three years. The term of the Commission will be extended if the Commission has demonstrated significant progress toward the goals of a significant increase in funding for access to justice, improved planning and coordination in legal service delivery, and reduction in the barriers to access to justice.

e. Compensation. The members and advisors are not entitled to compensation, but to the extent provided in the Judiciary's budget, may be reimbursed for expenses in connection with travel related to the work of the Commission.

f. Officers. The Chair may designate additional officers and committee chairs as appropriate.

g. Staff. There shall be an Executive Director of the Commission, who shall serve as staff.

2. Functions.

a. Purposes.

By bringing together leaders and stakeholders from the Maryland Judiciary and its justice system partners, the Commission gives meaningful voice to the public whose interest it serves. Therefore, subject to the limitations set forth in Section 3 of this Order, the Commission shall develop, consolidate, coordinate and/or implement initiatives designed to, and which are consistent with the Judiciary's policy to expand access to, and enhance the quality of, civil justice for persons who encounter barriers in gaining access to Maryland's civil justice system.

b. Duties. To carry out its purposes, the Commission shall:

- (i) Consult extensively with members of communities that experience barriers to justice, including persons living in poverty, language minorities, persons with disabilities, and others, to obtain their views regarding the barriers to equal justice and proposed solutions;
- (ii) Establish a coordinated planning process that involves members of the community affected by the crisis in equal access to justice in an effort to develop strategies to improve access and reduce barriers;
- (iii) Facilitate efforts to create improved coordination and support of civil legal services programs;
- (iv) Work with the courts, administrative agencies and lawmaking bodies to propose and promote rules and systemic changes that will open greater access to the justice system; and
- (v) Propose and promote strategies to generate adequate levels of public, private and volunteer resources and funding for the State's civil justice network and the access to justice initiatives identified by the Commission.

c. Report. The Commission shall prepare and file with the Court of Appeals, an annual report of the progress of the Commission's work during the preceding 12 months. The initial report shall be filed one (1) year from the date of this Order.

### 3. Scope of Authority.

Any recommendations by the Commission shall be made in the name of the Commission only, and not in the name of the individual members or the institutions they represent. The Commission shall not promote or pursue legislative or policy initiatives inconsistent with Judiciary policies or positions.

/s/ Robert M. Bell  
Robert M. Bell  
Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals

Filed: March 19, 2010

/s/ Bessie M. Decker  
Bessie M. Decker  
Clerk  
Court of Appeals of Maryland