

# MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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## MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

*19 September 2012*

### SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

#### 1. Old Business.

- a. ***Beyond Compliance.*** The document approved at the last meeting has been distributed. An Accessibility page is now on our website.
- b. ***Media Production.*** A number of short videos are in production.
- c. ***Access to Court Records / Expungement Brochures.*** These brochures will be printed and made available soon.
- d. ***Rules Initiatives.*** Both the limited scope representation and fee waiver rules proposals remain pending before the full Rules Committee.

#### 2. New Business

- a. ***MDEC Comments.*** The Commission approved proposed comments on the Judiciary's new information technology system, MDEC. Judges Harrell, Barbera and Watts did not participate in the deliberations on this matter. The letter will be submitted to the Rules Committee in response to their solicitation for public comments.
- b. ***Writing for Self-Represented Litigants.*** The Commission approved the content of a draft manual discussing plain language and other writing tips designed for Judiciary employees and legal services providers.

- c. **Pro Bono Practice Rule.** A new Maryland proposal drafted by the Access and Delivery of Legal Services Committee (intended to supplement Rule 15) would allow out-of-state attorneys, and retired or inactive Maryland attorneys, to serve pro bono through a Maryland pro bono organization or program. This would enable government attorneys to serve in this capacity. The matter was referred back to the ADLS Committee to discuss further and solicit input from several stakeholders. Judges Harrell, Barbera, and Watts did not participate in the deliberations on this matter.

### 3. Committee Reports

- a. **Self-Represented Litigants.** The Committee reviewed an extensive evaluation of the District Court Self-Help Center pilot program. The findings were positive and the evaluation would support expanding the program. The DCSHC has served 15,000 litigants to date in 2012. The Judiciary Ombud also reported to the Committee about the services he provides.
- b. **Public Education Committee.** The Committee has encountered barriers in trying to develop a curriculum around the *Thurgood* video production, mostly due to the production being too long. The Committee hopes to develop an educational program around the Commission's *Maryland Courts* video. People's Law Library has finished translating about 50 pages of the site, with the help of Program Services' translation contractor. PLL hopes to recruit more volunteer attorneys to help continue updating the site's content.
- c. **Definitions, Standards, & Awards Committee.** There was no report at this time.
- d. **Critical Barriers Committee.** The Committee solicited input from a panel of individuals who advocate for the foreign-born, to identify issues the immigrant community faces in trying to use the courts or get legal help. The Committee will return to the Commission with any recommendations.
- e. **Access & Delivery of Legal Services.** The Committee is pursuing an educational campaign to promote class action residual funds/*cy pres* awards to generate funds for legal services providers. The Fee-Shifting Subcommittee met with the Conference of Circuit Judges to obtain feedback on its revised draft of a fee-shifting bill. The Committee is also considering how law schools can enhance access to justice.

- 4. **Next Meeting.** The Commission will hold its next meeting on December 14, 2012.