

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Commission to Reimagine The Future of New York's Courts 2022 HEARINGS ON PANDEMIC PRACTICES

Commission to Reimagine The Future of New York's Courts, Henry M. Greenberg, Chair
Pandemic Practices Working Group, Hon. Craig J. Doran, Chair

Email: ppwg@nycourts.gov Web: www.nycourts.gov/reimagine-the-future/public-hearings.shtml

First Hearing: June 7, 2022 • 9:30 AM • NYS Court of Appeals, 20 Eagle St., Albany NY 12207

Live Stream: <https://nycourts.gov/ctapps/live.html>

Contemplated Upcoming Fall 2022 Hearings: New York City, Rochester/ Buffalo/ Syracuse

Virtual Listening Sessions: To Be Announced

The Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York's Courts announces a series of statewide public hearings to evaluate the technology, practices, and policies adopted by the state courts in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commission is conducting a thorough and multi-dimensional review through its Pandemic Practices Working Group (PPWG) in order to make recommendations to the Unified Court System regarding the adoption of practices implemented during the pandemic that will benefit the administration of justice in New York State courts going forward.

The first hearing on June 7th is intended to help define PPWG's goals and objectives going forward. Additional hearings will be held around the state in the fall. Presenters will have the option to appear in-person or virtually.

In addition to soliciting testimony at these public hearings, PPWG will review existing surveys, data, and reports, inside and outside of New York State, as well as solicit written submissions. PPWG seeks input from all stakeholders of New York's courts, including litigants, the bar, legal services providers, judges, court staff, community groups, law enforcement, associations, and other government and non-government entities. The review addresses the pandemic experience in all types of New York courts, including civil and criminal courts, appellate courts, family court, surrogate's court, housing court, and town & village courts.

PPWG will create a comprehensive report for submission to the Commission, and ultimately to the Chief Judge, on the efficacy of the pandemic measures implemented. The report will offer recommendations on (1) which measures should be carried forth and made part of permanent court practice and procedure, and (2) which measures should be memorialized for use in future instances where court operations are significantly impacted by disruptive events like the Covid-19 pandemic. The report will also provide recommendations on the appropriate methods for implementation of these changes, such as legislation, rule changes, policy/practice guidelines, and deployment of resources.

Hon. Craig J. Doran, Chair of the PPWG will be joined on the hearing panel by Henry M. Greenberg, Esq., Chair of the Commission, along with members of the Working Group.

About this Hearing:

The pandemic suddenly and dramatically changed the operations of New York's state courts. Some of these changes positively impacted litigants and increased the court's efficiency. Others presented ongoing challenges, especially to members of vulnerable communities and those who serve them.

These public hearings seek input from interested and knowledgeable individuals, organizations, and other entities about which measures adopted during the pandemic should be carried forth post-Covid, either on a permanent basis or in the event of a future crisis. Those who testify at these hearings will have the opportunity to be heard by a panel of judges, court officials, and others who effect, or are impacted by, change in the operation of the New York State Courts.

The Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York's Courts was established by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore in June 2020. Comprising a distinguished group of judges, lawyers, academics and technology experts, the Commission's mission is to research, analyze and make innovative proposals for the justice system of the future.

Topics may include:

- The impact of court-adopted Covid-19 technology, practices/protocols, and policy on the fair and efficient administration of justice in the state courts, including the use of remote technologies as well as modified in-person procedures for court proceedings.
- The ways in which pandemic practices impacted the efficacy of the New York state courts in providing comprehensive, timely, and accessible legal services, including language access, to all litigants.
- New or reimagined uses for technology to improve efficiency and access to justice.
- Blending in-person and virtual practices to meet the varied needs of different court users.
- The importance of meeting the needs of New Yorkers without consistent access to the technology required for virtual court proceedings, and those who are not familiar with using such technology.
- The impact of pandemic practices on the work of counsel, judges, and court staff.
- The use of technology to make courts more accessible for New Yorkers with limited mobility, who live in rural areas, who have childcare obligations, or who otherwise may struggle to attend court proceedings in person.
- The need for increased instruction and training on the use of technology for courtroom proceedings, for both litigants and legal services providers.

The Hearing Panel will consider both oral statements and written submissions. Because of limited time and the desire to hear from a diverse range of people and viewpoints, the Panel will accept requests to present oral testimony in advance, and will then notify individuals who are invited to testify. If you are interested in being invited to present, please send an email to PPWG@NYCOURTS.GOV no later than May 23, 2022 and (1) identify the presenter, their affiliation, and location (city, town, village, etc. and county); (2) attach a brief description of the topics and courts about which you propose to testify; and (3) indicate your preference to appear in-person or virtually. Oral statements will be limited to no more than ten minutes in length. Written statements are invited in place of or in addition to oral testimony. Written statements should be submitted by email and they should identify the author and the author's affiliation. Written submissions are also welcome after the initial June 7th hearing.

Please note that the Hearing Panel will not accept any comments, written or spoken, addressing details of individual litigation or comments about individual judges or attorneys.