



March 29, 2021

RE: Judicial Computer System Funding

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and our 67 counties, we are writing to express our concern over the future of the Unified Judicial System (UJS). The Governor's proposed FY 2021-2022 budget would make this the fifth consecutive year that the UJS would be flat funded. To compound the issue of flat funding, Act 42 of 2018 continues to divert \$15 million annually from the Judicial Computer System (JCS) to the Commonwealth General Fund for other purposes.

This level funding of UJS and use of funds from JCS for other purposes has become very problematic for county courts and continues to have negative impacts. The cumulative effect of five years of flat funding for court operations and \$75 million in diversions from JCS threatens the ability of the AOPC to continue to provide statewide case management systems to various levels of court at no additional cost to the counties. These systems are funded exclusively by additions to collections and "user" fees imposed on various court filings. By statute, with very limited exception, no other funds may be used for AOPC/IT operations.

However, if these detrimental funding diversions continue, AOPC/IT will be forced to shut down all modules (criminal, dependency and juvenile delinquency) of the Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS), which has been in place since 2006. Other services AOPC/IT provides, such as ERMS (document management) and PACFile (e-filing) for the common pleas courts, will also need to be discontinued. Statewide docket sheets for the common pleas level of courts will no longer be available for the public or court users.

Without these systems in place, essential functions of county court systems will be lost and counties have had no opportunity or funding to plan for a system replacement. Further, if counties are forced to replace the system locally, the continuity that the current system provides would be lost. For example, losing statewide and county data-sharing capabilities will result in the loss of electronic data transfer to other county systems, such as probation and district attorneys. The electronic transfer of court data to agencies, such as the state police, PennDOT, the Department of Revenue will also be lost.

CCAP members request the restoration of funding for the UJS as a whole by extending the surcharges first implemented by Act 49 of 2009, and for JCS in particular, by ending the annual diversion of \$15 million of JCS funds accomplished through Act 42 of 2018. Please consider this

without delay, as projections estimate the system will be shutdown by December 2022, with too little time and too few resources for counties to fund, create and implement new systems.

We thank you again for your consideration of these comments. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley Lenker White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ashley Lenker White
Director of Government Relations