

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

Upcoming Hearings and Listening Sessions

Western New York Hearing: October 6, 2022 • 9:30 AM • Old Erie County Hall, 92 Franklin St., Buffalo, NY 14202

New York City Hearing: October 31, 2022 • 9:30 AM • New York City Bar, 42 W. 44th St., New York, NY 10036

Remote Listening Sessions: Various Dates and Topics

The Commission to Reimagine the Future of New York's Courts announces two additional public hearings, to be held in Buffalo and New York City, as part of its series of statewide 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 Commission also will be hosting a series of Remote Listening Sessions. A full listing is available on the Public Hearings' **webpage**.

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, judicial and bar 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 courts, surrogate's courts, housing courts, 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 panels by Henry M. Greenberg, Esq., Chair of the Commission, along with members of the Working Group.

About these hearings:

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 for testimony 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 Commission is seeking input from a diverse range of people and viewpoints and will consider both oral statements and written submissions. Because of limited time, requests to present oral testimony at a hearing or participate in a Listening Session will be accepted in advance and individuals who are selected will be notified prior the event date. Oral hearing statements will be limited to no more than ten minutes in length and may be further limited as needed. If you are interested in being invited to present at a hearing or participate in a Listening Session, please send an email to ppwg@nycourts.gov. The email should be sent no later than September 12, 2022 for the Buffalo hearing, and October 7, 2022 for the New York City hearing. In your email, please (1) identify the presenter, their affiliation, and location (city, town, village, etc. and county), (2) indicate the hearing or Listening Session they would like to participate in, and (3) attach a brief description of the topics and courts about which they propose to testify or discuss.

Written statements are invited in place of or in addition to oral testimony. The deadline for submissions is November 7, 2022. Please send by email and identify the author and the author's affiliation. The Hearing Panel will not accept any comments, written or spoken, addressing details of individual litigation or comments about individual judges or attorneys.

The Commission continues to monitor the public health policies applicable for each venue and will determine accordingly whether virtual testimony will be accepted. Additional information, including details about the Listening Sessions and the recordings, transcripts and a summary of the initial Albany hearing held on June 7, 2022, is available on the Public Hearings [webpage](#).