WASHINGTON COURTS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

February 22, 2019

TO: Judicial Information System Committee Members

FROM: Dory Nicpon, AOC Associate Director, Judicial and Legislative Relations

RE: Legislative Update -- February 2019

As of the preparation of this report, over 1,800 bills have been introduced. In addition to the review undertaken separately by each level of court, a small team within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) screens all bill introductions and identifies bills that require analysis and tracking. As of the preparation of this report, AOC was actively tracking nearly 600 bills, many of which are lengthy and contemplate significant changes in public policy.

The introduction of so many bills is consistent with anytime:

1) One political party has a significant majority in both legislative branch chambers;
2) The legislature has many newly-elected members;
3) There is a positive revenue forecast; and
4) There is a long (odd-numbered year) legislative session.

Judicial Branch Legislative Priorities

Court Technology Projects: The judicial branch is successfully implementing major modernization projects for all court levels and needs continued funding to deliver the projects and support them after delivery. **STATUS: AOC staff continue to engage with members and staff from the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee to ensure the decision packages submitted are understood and supported.**

Language Access/Interpreter Services: Courts need adequate funding for qualified interpreters to maximize courthouse efficiency and ensure access to justice for individuals who are deaf, hearing impaired, or who have limited English proficiency. **STATUS: Judicial officers who chaired or participated in the BJA Interpreter Task Force, and AOC staff, have been meeting with members regarding the decision package submission. BJA's Program Manager has also facilitated letters of support to members from judicial partners, advocates, and other constituencies.**

Education for Judges and Court Staff: Adequate funding is needed for timely and relevant training of judicial officers and court personnel. Such training provides information about implicit bias, cultural competence, best practices in court operations, and changes that impact the judiciary. **STATUS: Judicial officers who chaired or participated in the BJA Interpreter Task Force, and AOC staff, have been meeting with members regarding the decision package submission. BJA's Program Manager has also facilitated letters of support to members from judicial partners, advocates, and other constituencies.**

Family and Juvenile Court Improvement: Early father identification and staff oversight of dependency cases improves outcomes for children and families. Funding is needed to expand the proven strategies of the FJCIP courts. **STATUS: AOC staff continue to engage with members and staff from the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee to ensure the decision package submitted is understood and supported, as well as leverage partnerships with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to garner support for the decision package.**

Guardianship Services: With growing populations of seniors and vulnerable individuals, funding is needed for additional public guardians and creation of a regional guardianship monitoring program to support courts in their oversight of guardians. Statutory amendment is needed to adjust the services offered by public guardians. **STATUS: The House Civil Rights and Judiciary Committee convened a public hearing on HB 1329 (Concerning the methods of services provided by the office of public guardianship.) on January 30. As of the preparation of this report, this bill is schedule for executive session on February 8.**

Courthouse Security: Funding and coordination is needed to ensure everyone visiting a courthouse can do so in a safe and secure environment. **STATUS: AOC staff have discussed this as a next Task Force within the BJA.**

Domestic Violence Data: A statutory refinement to domestic violence definitions is needed to facilitate more specific data collection and to distinguish between intimate partner violence and non-intimate partner violence in order to improve risk assessments. **STATUS: The House Public Safety Committee held a work session on the report developed by the domestic violence work groups convened pursuant to HB 1163 (2017), which addressed this definition change need. After a public hearing on HB 1517 (Concerning domestic violence.), Representative Goodman included the definition split in the substitute version of HB 1517.**

Traffic Fine Consolidation and Relicensing Program: Judicial support and implementation is needed for a program proposed by the Attorney General to consolidate fines that an individual has incurred in multiple jurisdictions and restore driving privileges.

STATUS: At the request of the Office of the Attorney General, HB 1489/SB 5575 (Traffic LFO consolidation.) has been introduced in each chamber of the legislature and contemplates that AOC will created a program.

Superior Court Judge Positions: Statutory adjustment is needed for an additional superior court judge in Clark County and an additional superior court judge in the tri-county judicial district for Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties. **STATUS: The Senate Law and Justice Committee had a public hearing on SB 5450 on January 29 and passed a substitute version out of committee on January 31. The substitute version stripped the additional superior court position for Clark County from the bill. Statements during executive action suggested this was because Clark County's local match may not be supported by their local legislative authority. AOC staff have outreached again to secure budget commitments from Clark, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties as further support for the bill.**

Other Legislative Discussions

Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Protective Arrangements Act (UGCPAA): There appears to be legislative interest in Washington's adoption of the UGCPAA. Reacting to certain of the concerns expressed in the House Civil Rights and Judiciary Committee, the Senate Law and Justice Committee conducted a public hearing on a substitute version.

New Hope Act: Representative Drew Hansen sponsored a bill called the New Hope Act (HB 1041), which: 1) modifies the process for an offender to receive a certificate of discharge once the offender has completed supervision, met all sentencing requirements, and paid all restitution; and 2) expands the circumstances in which an offender may have a conviction vacated.

Mental/Behavioral Health: Several recent committee work sessions and public policy discussions concern mental and behavioral health issues, increasing demand for mental health services and the *Trueblood* settlement.