



October 18, 2017

Dear Chief Judge Evans,

On behalf of Chicago Appleseed and the Chicago Council of Lawyers, I want to follow up on the initiative surrounding the placement of court recording equipment in the eviction courts in the Circuit Court of Cook County. It appears that this once-promising initiative seems to have stalled, despite the agreement in principle from your office and the AOIC that such recording equipment is badly needed, in particular to protect the rights of pro se litigants who represent the vast majority of defendants in eviction cases. I hope we can work together to get this important reform accomplished. We have had conversations with representatives of the AOIC who indicated that progress is being made.

Is it possible to have court recording technology for the eviction courts connected to those courtrooms currently part of the Circuit Court's communication room in the Daley Center? If yes, by when could this be done?

Alternatively, we have been in touch with the technology staff at the federal court at 219 South Dearborn. Magistrate Judges in the Northern District do not have regular court reporters assigned to the courtrooms, but proceedings in those courts are recorded on audio so that they may later be transcribed. These representatives are willing to meet with you and/or others that you invite to discuss how this technology can be implemented in an affordable way in the Circuit Court eviction court rooms. We would be happy to help facilitate discussions about such an approach as a low-cost alternative to ensure that recordings of proceedings are available.

We very much appreciate your receptiveness to hearing from our organizations on this and many other reform-minded issues. We know that both you and Presiding Judge Wright take the treatment of unrepresented litigants in eviction court seriously, as shown by, among other things, the forthcoming project to increase access to pro bono assistance for pro se tenants. We also recognize your efforts as Chief Judge to ensure fair treatment of individuals with few resources, such as your recently enacted General Administrative Order regarding bond in criminal court. We believe providing access to court recording equipment for such litigants would further solidify the message that the Circuit Court and your office in particular are committed to fairness.

As you know, in addition to our organizations, many other legal and community organizations in this issue and would like to press forward with a solution, including CARPLS, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, DLA Piper, the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, LAF, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. We understand that there is media interest in the issue as well.

We would like to work collaboratively with you to ensure that a solution is implemented, and are more than willing to work collaboratively as an advocate for implementing a solution to the extent it would be helpful. I look forward to your response. Please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss this issue.

Sincerely,
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