Supreme Court of Florida

No. AOSC20-12

IN RE: RESPONSE OF THE FLORIDA STATE COURTS SYSTEM TO CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

WHEREAS the World Health Organization (WHO), the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Florida State Emergency Operations Center have devised systems to detect and monitor the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a severe acute respiratory illness that can spread among humans through respiratory transmission; and

WHEREAS the Governor of Florida has declared a state of emergency exists and the Surgeon General and State Health Officer has declared a public health emergency exists, and the Florida State Courts System must, therefore, in an abundance of caution, increase its prevention measures and preparations; and

WHEREAS the Florida State Courts System has spent many years preparing for the possibility of an emergency caused by an epidemic or pandemic such as COVID-19 and has developed a benchguide, extensive planning materials, templates, and other documents – which are available for all parts of the State

Courts System to use – as reflected on its website at https://www.flcourts.org/Resources-Services/Emergency-Preparedness/COVID-19-Information-and-Updates, and specifically the Strategy for Pandemic COVID-19 guide located at https://www.flcourts.org/content/download/608358/6899605/strategy-for-pandemic-covid-19-2020.pdf; and

WHEREAS preparations for COVID-19 are now a high priority in the Florida State Courts System.

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred upon me by article V, section 2(b), of the Florida Constitution as the chief administrative officer of the judicial system,

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. All chief judges of the district and circuit courts shall continue ongoing planning and shall take such mitigating measures as may be necessary to address the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on their respective courts, including review of their emergency preparedness plans and personnel policies, and dialogue with local governmental, health, and law enforcement agencies to ensure that planning is coordinated with those entities. All such efforts shall be consistent with the policy of mitigating the impact of COVID-19 while keeping the courts open to the fullest extent consistent with public safety and shall be implemented at

a time and in a manner consistent with any further policy directives from the Chief Justice and with federal, state, and local public health advisories. Mitigating measures include but are not limited to:

a. prudent methods of social distancing to eliminate unnecessary face-to-face contact to the extent consistent with law;

b. sanitary procedures designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on court property; and

c. use of technology, electronic documents, electronic communications, and other electronic means of conducting court business to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, to the extent consistent with law.

2. The Court Emergency Management Group (CEMG) shall continue ongoing planning and take such preventive and mitigating measures as may be necessary to address the COVID-19 outbreak, including continuous review of court emergency preparedness plans and personnel policies, in concert with the other branches of government and any of their subdivisions that may be involved in pandemic preparedness to ensure that court planning is coordinated with those entities. The CEMG shall recommend, develop, distribute, and implement policy directives from the Chief Justice as may be needed to deal with changes to normal operations of the Florida State Courts necessitated by COVID-19 including but not limited to ensuring staffing and administering attendance and leave. The Office of

the State Courts administrator shall develop and distribute guidance on travel by judges and court staff during the COVID-19 outbreak, and shall update such travel guidance on an ongoing basis in consideration of the changing circumstances.

3. In order that the Chief Justice may consider and enter appropriate orders and provide necessary support, the chief judges of the circuit and district courts shall inform the CEMG promptly of any circumstances that are adversely affecting the operation of the State Courts System.

4. All chief judges of the district and circuit courts are authorized to expend state funds to purchase emergency preparedness supplies to provide increased protection for State Courts System officers, employees, and the public. Chief judges of the district and circuit courts may authorize the expedited procurement of emergency supplies. If the expedited purchase is authorized, the requirement to obtain competitive quotes for the purchase of supplies up to $34,999 will be temporarily waived. The authorization provided by this section is limited to purchases of emergency supplies necessary to prepare for and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and shall expire on September 30, 2020, unless extended by a directive of the Chief Justice.

DONE AND ORDERED at Tallahassee, Florida, on March 11, 2020.

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Chief Justice Charles T. Canady

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ATTEST:

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John A. Tomasino, Clerk of Court

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