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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maine Judicial Branch Announces Revisions to Pandemic Management Orders

Portland, ME – The Maine Judicial Branch issued revisions to the Pandemic Management Orders (PMOs) today updating the measures being taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and include:

- PMO-SJC-1
- PMO-SJC-3
- PMO-TC-1

The new PMOs extend many of the emergency deadlines, expand the list of cases and proceedings that may be scheduled and heard, and implement additional safety precautions for those entering courthouse facilities consistent with the Governor's Executive Orders. The Supreme Judicial Court also announced the creation of a new stakeholders advisory group to provide information and assistance to the Judicial Branch as it continues to formulate plans to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on court operations.

USE OF MASKS IN COURTHOUSE FACILITIES. Effective May 5, 2020, all members of the public who enter any courthouse facility will be required to wear a mask or cloth face covering that covers the nose and mouth at all times. See PMO-SJC-1.

HEARINGS
Effective immediately, and continuing through May 30, 2020, the courts may schedule and hear virtually all case types and proceedings so long as all hearings, conferences, and other court events take place only by video or audio conference. In scheduling hearings, conferences, and other court events, the courts will continue to allocate judicial resources in such a manner that priority cases receive precedence. See PMO-SJC-1.

FILING OF DOCUMENTS IN PRIORITY CASES
The Maine Judicial Branch has provided for the email filing, Mondays through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., of certain court documents in priority cases and has expanded the list to include complaints for protection from abuse orders. See PMO-SJC-3 for guidance on how to file documents by email.

DEFERRED JURY TRIALS
Deferrals for all jury trials have been extended by PMO-SJC-1 as follows:

- All civil and criminal jury trials are deferred until after June 30, 2020 at the earliest.
- Grand jury sessions will not be held until after June 30, 2020.

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ORAL ARGUMENTS IN THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT
Oral Arguments before the Supreme Judicial Court will proceed either by video conference or be addressed by the court upon briefs submitted by the parties. See PMO-SJC-1.

STAKEHOLDERS ADVISORY GROUP
The Judicial Branch announces the creation of a new stakeholders advisory group to provide information and assistance to the Judicial Branch as the Branch continues to formulate plans to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on court operations. The group is comprised of a wide variety of organizations and groups whose members regularly appear in Maine court proceedings. Video conference meetings of the group will occur on May 14 at 9:30 a.m. and on May 21 at 9:30 a.m. Any party or group beyond those listed in PMO-SJC-1 wishing to be included should send a request to: chiefjustice@courts.maine.gov, no later than noon on May 7, 2020.

TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS
All deadlines established pursuant to M.R. Civ. P. 80F (traffic infractions), and set to expire on or before May 31, 2020, have been extended to June 1, 2020. See PMO-TC-1.

FINES, FEES, RESTITUTION, AND ATTORNEY FEE REIMBURSEMENTS
Fines and fees can be paid online, eliminating the need to come to a courthouse. Here is the site for online payments. https://www5.informe.org/online/courts/fines/

For those unable to pay their fines and fees at this time, the deadline for fine payments is extended through June 1, 2020. See PMO-TC-1.

COURT HOURS
Court hours in every region continue to be adjusted. The current schedule can be found here https://www.courts.maine.gov/maine_courts/schedules/closings.shtml.

Do not come to court without checking courthouse schedules. Because changes in court hours may occur daily, any person intending to go to a Maine courthouse should check the website here: https://www.courts.maine.gov/maine_courts/schedules/closings.shtml before traveling to the court or call 207-753-2999 and be aware that you must wear a mask or cloth face covering while inside courthouses.

Do not go to any courthouse if you are sick, if you have the virus, or if you know that you have been exposed to the virus. If have questions about whether you should go to a courthouse, please call 207-753-2999. For general inquiries concerning the Judicial Branch's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, contact info@courts.maine.gov.

Please visit the Judicial Branch's webpage at: https://www.courts.maine.gov/covid19.shtml
for the latest information about the Judicial Branch's response to COVID-19 and related court orders.