FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACTS:

State Court Administrative Office	John Nevin	NevinJ@courts.mi.gov
Michigan Association of Counties	Derek Melot	Melot@MiCounties.org
Michigan Association of County Clerks	Laura Brandon-Maveal	LauraB@gladwincounty-mi.gov

Courts, Counties, Clerks Commit to Cooperation

Create Task Force to Focus on Enhancing Virtual Services to the Public

Lansing, MI, March 25, 2020 – Today, the State Court Administrative Office, the Michigan Association of County Clerks, and the Michigan Association of Counties announced steps they are taking to coordinate their response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. All three organizations are working together to make sure that plans to protect the public, safeguard employees, and provide essential services are consistent across jurisdictions. Leaders from the judiciary, county boards of commissioners, and County Clerks also announced they are creating a task force with the help of the State Bar of Michigan to enhance virtual services by identifying and sharing best practices.

"Judges and court staff statewide are grateful for the dedicated service of County Clerks and the support of county government," said State Court Administrator and former District Court Judge Tom Boyd. "Working together in response to this crisis can put us on a path to building the courtroom of the future – one that is more transparent, more accessible, and more efficient."

"Consistent policies statewide help staff in every county know that their work in difficult conditions is supported and appreciated," said Laura Brandon-Maveal, Gladwin County Clerk and President of the Michigan Association of County Clerks. "The end result is that the public is better served and the safety of all can remain our top priority."

"Public employees at the local level play a critical role in responding to this unprecedented crisis," said Stephan Currie, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Counties. "Strengthening our cooperation now will set the stage to improve how we provide services and take advantage of technology to serve more people."

Essential services provided by courts include functions involving the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults and meeting due process rights of individuals accused of crimes. For example, judges must be available to arraign criminal defendants and hear bond motions, to grant personal protection orders, or appoint a guardian when someone's health or safety is in jeopardy, to protect children who are being abused, to incarcerate those who threaten public safety, and to issue emergency orders to address this public health crisis. Court clerks must be present to record these proceedings.

(MORE)

County Clerks are on the front line in dealing with parties when filing. This could be as simple as opening a new case or filing a motion, or as a complex as dealing with a victim of assault that is filing a personal protection order or preparing themselves to face their alleged attacker in the courtroom. The Clerks and their staff need to define their assistance to the public as fair and equitable regardless of their feelings of the case and be careful not to overstep their boundaries in giving legal advice. County Clerks must have a solid working relationship with their judges to ensure that communication is easy, rules are clearly identified and that both groups have a core practice in providing the best and equitable results for any case.

###