NEWS RELEASE

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New Hampshire Circuit Court Announces Emergency Landlord Tenant Mediation Project

Pilot effort in two courts looks to reduce eviction case backlog due to COVID-19

CONCORD, NH – The New Hampshire Circuit Court, through its Office of Mediation and Arbitration, is piloting a new project to resolve landlord-tenant disputes through mediation. Starting in two pilot courts this month, the Emergency Landlord and Tenant Mediation Pilot Project will work to reduce the backlog of eviction cases caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide a practical, no-cost alternative to resolving these cases in court.

Working with a trained mediator, landlords and tenants who have filed an appearance with the court will have the opportunity to work out their eviction disputes in an informal setting. The mediation process is entirely voluntary and agreements reached through mediation may eliminate the need for the parties involved having to appear in court. Concord and Claremont Circuit Courts will serve as the initial pilot sites. During the pilot phase, participants in the mediation process will be referred to the project by the courts.

“Mediation gives landlords and tenants the opportunity to come up with creative solutions that are beneficial to both parties and tailored to their individual situations,” noted Margaret Huang, coordinator of the Office of Mediation and Arbitration, “and this emergency pilot project could not be better positioned to resolve these cases during the COVID-19 pandemic, when both landlords and tenants may have been seriously financially impacted.”

Administrative Judge David King agreed. “The Circuit Courts have managed an enormous number of cases during the pandemic, but landlord and tenant cases continue to be a concern. With the help of trained mediators, we feel both parties will find equitable outcomes and a more timely access to court decisions than is currently possible.”

To assess the success of the program, both in terms of helping parties resolve cases without a trial, and in managing the court’s landlord and tenant docket, the court will review the results of the cases that have been referred to mediation. Depending on the results, landlord and tenant mediation services may be

expanded to more courts statewide. For more information, see the New Hampshire Judicial Branch website: www.courts.state.nh.us.

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Media Contact:
Tammy L. Jackson
Communications Office
NH Supreme Court
Concord, NH 03301
tjackson@courts.state.nh.us
603.475.9218