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District of Columbia Courts
Newsroom

DC COURTS STATEMENT, MARCH 18, 2020, 1:30PM

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The DC Courts take very seriously the responsibility to provide access to justice, while also ensuring that we provide a safe and secure environment in which rights can be upheld. For that reason, DC Superior Court has kept its adult arraignment courtroom and juvenile new intake courtroom operational this week. The Juvenile New Intake Courtroom is responsible for juveniles who have been arrested, as well as families in which a child has been removed for reasons of abuse or neglect. Additionally, the DC Superior Court has just a few other courtrooms operational, handling emergency matters and processing persons who have been arrested. To minimize the risk of exposure, the DC Courts have limited court operations to those deemed absolutely essential to protect public health and safety.

We were informed by the Marshals Service late yesterday that one of the deputy marshals who worked in the courthouse tested positive for coronavirus. As a result, we immediately notified those court staff who may have had contact with the deputy marshal and had both courtrooms and the holding cells that adjoin them thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Chief Judge Morin fully briefed criminal justice partners of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council on these developments in a conference call early this morning. In addition, the Court is having the entire cellblock thoroughly cleaned. The DC Courts continue to follow US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and DC Department of Health guidelines. The Courts' Executive Officer emailed all court staff this morning to inform them of this development.

"The well-being of our employees, other professionals who work at the court buildings, and the public are important and carefully considered as we make decisions about limiting our operations. DC Superior Court has a responsibility to ensure that emergency matters are handled, but also to postpone any non-urgent hearings," said DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin.

“The Joint Committee just issued an order invoking emergency authority under the DC Code to give both Chief Judges the authority to take needed steps during this public health crisis to extend deadlines and make other necessary changes to court operations and court rules to address the coronavirus risk," said DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, who chairs the DC Courts Joint Committee on Judicial Administration. She emphasized, "The DC Courts are endeavoring to meet emergency needs of the community, while minimizing exposure risk to the greatest extent possible."

The well-being of court employees, other professionals who work at the courthouse, and the public are the highest priority as the DC Courts make decisions about limiting court operations.

For more information, contact (202) 879-1700.