FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Delaware Judiciary extends emergency, maintains Phase Two in reopening plan

The Chief Justice has signed a fourth extension of the Judicial Emergency that first went into effect on March 16, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. today signed an order extending the 30-day judicial emergency for a fourth time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Courts are now in the midst of a phased reopening plan, which welcomed the public back into Court facilities on June 15, 2020, significant safety restrictions remain in place and court operations have not yet returned to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The Chief Justice extended the judicial emergency to August 6, 2020 after consultation with other members of the Supreme Court and the Courts' infectious disease expert, Dr. Alfred Bacon. "The COVID-19 outbreak remains a real threat to the health and safety of all Delawareans. The virus continues to spread in other states at an alarming level. Given the continuing uncertainty about the progress of the virus in Delaware and around the country, we will continue for at least another month, and probably longer, under Phase Two of our reopening plan to reduce the risk of exposure to our employees, attorneys, litigants and the public at large at court facilities," said Chief Justice Seitz.

Under Phase Two, the public is back in Court facilities for hearings and non-jury trials. The Supreme Court has also resumed in person oral arguments. To minimize traffic in the courthouses, the Courts continue to encourage employees to work remotely when possible and to conduct hearings through secure audio and video conferencing. Chief Justice Seitz noted that while some operations at Delaware courthouses have been limited, the Courts have been able to conduct much of their usual business in both criminal and civil matters – with the exception of jury trials – thanks to the use of audio and video technology.

When the Courts move to Phase Three of the reopening plan and resume jury trials, traffic will increase significantly at state courthouses. The move to Phase Three will occur only when the facts and medical advice support the move. The full reopening plan can be viewed on the Court's website here: https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/courtsreopeningplan.pdf. A subcommittee of the Courts Reopening Committee is working on recommendations to safely resume jury trials.

The Chief Justice thanked judicial branch employees and the public for their patience and understanding as the Courts work through the operational challenges of a COVID-19 world.

The Delaware Courts continue to provide the public and members of the Bar with regular updates on changes to court operations on the Court's COVID-19 response page https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/covid-19.

For the latest information on COVID-19 please visit the State of Delaware's informational website on COVID-19 at: de.gov/coronavirus. If you have any questions you can contact the State's Department of Public Health Coronavirus call center by phone at 1-866-408-1899 or by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.