PRESS RELEASE

New York State
Unified Court System

Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge

Contact:
Lucian Chalfen,
Public Information Director
Arlene Hackel, Deputy Director
(212) 428-2500

www.nycourts.gov/press

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Chief Judge Appoints Council of Business Leaders to Boost Access to Justice Efforts, Address Intensified Civil Legal Services Needs of Low-Income New Yorkers in COVID Era

ALBANY, NEW YORK–Chief Judge Janet DiFiore today announced the establishment of the Business Council for Access to Justice, a diverse group of business leaders whose valuable experience will serve to complement the efforts of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, which, since 2010, has worked to expand access to civil legal services for low-income families and individuals statewide, earning New York leadership status on access-to-justice issues.

Led by Eric F. Grossman, Managing Director and Chief Legal Officer of Morgan Stanley, and Kimberley D. Harris, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of NBCUniversal, the Business Council will provide strategic advice and support on critical initiatives, from educating the business sector on the importance of policies supporting equal access to justice, to fostering pro bono service by corporate counsel, to partnering with legal service providers on specific projects designed to close the access-to-justice gap in low-income communities.

“At a time when our justice system is up against so many challenges arising from COVID-19, we are fortunate to be able to call upon the experience of business leaders who know what it takes to successfully lead large organizations through turbulent times. We could not be more grateful to Eric Grossman, Kimberley Harris and the members of the Council, and look forward to working with them, learning from them and building for the future with them,” said Chief Judge DiFiore.

The Chief Judge also acknowledged Robert Fiske, Jr. of Davis, Polk & Wardwell for his support in organizing the Business Council; the members of the Permanent Commission, chaired by Helaine Barnett, for their achievements over the past decade in reducing New York’s justice gap; and Hon. Edwina Mendelson, the court system’s Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, and her staff for their ongoing dedication to the justice needs of vulnerable New Yorkers, including their extraordinary efforts throughout the pandemic.

Judge DiFiore made today’s announcement from Albany’s Court of Appeals Hall, during her annual statewide public hearing to evaluate the continuing unmet civil legal services of low-income New Yorkers. To limit public density in safeguarding the health of today’s participants, the hearing was conducted in hybrid fashion, virtually and in person, with Judiciary and Bar leaders present at Court of Appeals Hall to underscore their deep commitment to the issue of access to justice, particularly in these unprecedented times. Chief Judge DiFiore was joined on the hearing panel by Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks, the four Presiding Justices of the Appellate Division: Hon. Rolando T. Acosta, First Dept.; Hon. Alan D. Scheinkman, Second Dept.; Hon. Elizabeth A. Garry, Third Dept.; and Hon. Gerald J. Whalen, Fourth Dept.; and New York State Bar Association President Scott M. Karson.

With the growing legal problems brought on by COVID-19 affecting the healthcare, housing and other basic needs of so many low-income New Yorkers, this year’s hearing centered on the significance of accessible, publicly funded legal services in confronting the civil justice crisis resulting from the pandemic.

Presenters from various regions of the State−among them, judges, corporate executives, legal aid attorneys and their clients−appeared remotely to offer live testimony on a range of topics, including the anticipated need for civil legal services by low-income New Yorkers adversely impacted by the pandemic; the increased importance of civil legal services in Black and Brown communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19; the successful use of expanded and new technology to ensure access to justice; and the economic benefits to individuals, communities, the courts and the State from the provision of civil legal services where essentials of life are at stake.

The information gathered from today's hearing−combined with the Commission's year-round work and research−will form the basis for the Chief Judge's annual report to the Governor and Legislature on the progress being made to narrow New York's justice gap, the barriers that remain and the potential for addressing the increased demand for legal services arising from the ongoing public health crisis.

A list of the Business Council for Access to Justice members follows.

Business Council for Access to Justice

Co-Chairs

Eric F. Grossman, Esq.
Managing Director and Chief Legal Officer, Morgan Stanley

Kimberley D. Harris, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, NBCUniversal LLC

Members

Peter J. Beshar, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc.

Michelle H. Browdy, Esq.
Senior Vice President, Legal and Regulatory Affairs, and General Counsel, IBM

Ben Campbell, Esq.
General Counsel, Deloitte

David Cohen, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, New York Mets

Business Council for Access to Justice
Members

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Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, ViacomCBS Inc.

Jennifer M. Daniels, Esq.
Chief Legal Officer and Secretary, Colgate-Palmolive Company

Markus U. Diethelm, Esq.
General Counsel, UBS AG

Beth Essig, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Mount Sinai Health System

Lucy Fato, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, AIG

Michael Fricklas, Esq.
Chief Legal Officer and Secretary, Advance

Stephen W. Gauster, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Metlife

Daniel Halem, Esq.
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Legal Officer, Major League Baseball

Markus Hartmann, Esq.
Vice President and General Counsel, Carrols Restaurant Group, Inc.

William J. Hochul, Esq.
Sr. Vice Pres., General Counsel and Secretary, Delaware North, and former U.S. Attorney, Western District of New York

Amit Khanna, Esq.
General Counsel, Knotel

Doug Lankler, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Pfizer

Sandra Leung, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Bristol Meyers Squibb

David Levine, Esq.
General Counsel, Bloomberg LP

J. Kevin McCarthy, Esq.
Sr. Exec. Vice President and General Counsel, BNY Mellon

Laura P. O'Hara, Esq.
General Counsel, M & T Bank

Business Council for Access to Justice
Members

Edward J. Pelta, Esq.
General Counsel, Vice President and Secretary, Gleason Corp.

Jonathan Schwartz, Esq.
Chief Legal and Corporate Affairs Officer, Univision Communications Inc.

Laureen E. Seeger, Esq.
Chief Legal Officer, American Express Company

Karen P. Seymour, Esq.
Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Goldman Sachs

Alyson Spaulding, Esq.
General Counsel, Kaleida Health

Deirdre Stanley, Esq.
Exec. Vice Pres. and General Counsel, Esteé Lauder Companies

Mark Steffensen, Esq.
Sr. Executive Vice Pres. and General Counsel, HSBC North America Holdings Inc.

Zachary D. Stern, Esq.
General Counsel, PwC US

Isaac Torres, Esq.
Sr. Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Carver Bancorp, Inc.

Lorrie Turner, Esq.
Chief Legal Officer and Sr. Vice Pres. of Global Legal and Brand Protection,
New Era Cap

Joseph Wayland, Esq.
Executive Vice President, Chubb Group, and General Counsel

Rohan Weerasinghe, Esq.
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Citi

David Yawman, Esq.
Exec. Vice Pres., Government Affairs, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary,
PepsiCo, Inc.

To view/listen to the Chief Judge's 2020 Hearing on Civil Legal Services in New York, go to:

http://nycourts.gov/ctapps/civil.html

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