FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2020

All Delaware Court facilities ordered closed to the public until April 15, 2020
Only limited exception is for 24-hour Justice of the Peace Court locations

Delaware Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. today ordered all court facilities closed to the public as of Monday, March 23, 2020 until at least April 15, 2020 as part of the Delaware Judiciary's ongoing response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In his order, the Chief Justice noted that the escalation of the spread of the COVID-19 virus now requires greater precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of litigants, practitioners, court staff and the public.

"Since the declaration of a judicial emergency on March 14, 2020, the courts have done remarkable work using video and telephone instead of in-person appearances while postponing non-emergency matters. Despite these measures to reduce the traffic in our state courthouses, we have had several possible exposures which have been reported publicly. Given the escalating nature of the public health emergency, we needed to take further measures to protect the safety of the courts and our justice partners while keeping essential judicial functions operating." said Chief Justice Seitz. The Chief Justice also thanked all those who continue to keep our justice system functioning under these trying circumstances.

Courthouse staffing will be reduced starting Monday to focus on handling emergency and essential matters, particularly those involving criminal justice. The 24-hour Justice of the Peace Court locations in each county (Court 11 in New Castle County, Court 7 in Kent County and Court 3 in Sussex County) will remain open for payment of bail for all courts and emergency criminal and civil filings for the Justice of the Peace Court. Those employees not directed to be part of the limited staffing of the courts are being directed to stay home and, as directed, work remotely until further notice.

Each courthouse will provide a method – such as a drop box – for attorneys and the public without access to e-filing who need to file paper documents when e-filing is not available. When practical, the courts shall provide an email address for attorneys and the public to email documents which will be considered filed with the court when received. The order signed by the Chief Justice also suspends certain requirements for sworn declarations or verifications. For additional details, please see the text of the order at:
https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=120578

For all court proceedings conducted through April 15, 2020, when practical, the courts shall post the date and time of the hearing on the court website and, when requested, provide access to media organizations. All non-emergency and non-essential telephonic and video hearings shall proceed at the discretion of each court.

For the latest information about the Delaware Judiciary's response to COVID-19, please visit https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/covid-19

For the latest information on the 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.