

# **Community Legal Aid**

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio



[www.communitylegalaid.org](http://www.communitylegalaid.org)

---

## **Legal Aid's statement re: Courts' actions amid Coronavirus**

### **Ohio's courts can and should be doing more to protect residents' health and rights**

Statement from Steven McGarrity of Community Legal Aid on the Supreme Court of Ohio's recommendations to local courts for procedural responses to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

There is no more important time for leadership and clear, swift, decisive action than in the midst of a public crisis. This is the case we're seeing with the Coronavirus pandemic, and Community Legal Aid is urging the Supreme Court of Ohio and all our local courts to take measures to properly respond to this situation.

We are thrilled that Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor outlined today recommendations for local courts to protect our community by postponing non-essential appearances, including foreclosures and evictions. This would allow people to focus on getting through this difficult time, instead of putting themselves at risk by appearing in court. We are thankful that many of our local courts already have enacted these common-sense measures, and we strongly urge all other local courts to do the same.

While technology has an important role to play in our judicial system, and more broadly in our community's response to this crisis, we at Legal Aid believe too heavy of a reliance on these systems won't have the intended effect of expanding access to justice, and may even prove detrimental, especially to those without legal representation. Relying on untested methods, such as telephonic hearings and video conferencing, poses a greater threat to individuals' legal rights than simply postponing non-essential legal proceedings and should be used with caution.

Our court system is not immune to infectious disease. This is a time when everyone is making tough decisions in order to take care of our community and to help prevent the spread of this virus. Legal Aid is proud to be stepping up to do the same.

The difficult reality is that everyone in our community will be negatively impacted during this time. Businesses are losing revenue. Restaurants have had to close their dining rooms. Small retail

owners are shutting their doors. Workers are losing income. Students are suffering from compromised educational services. Patients are dealing with postponed elective medical procedures. And our health workers are putting themselves in harm's way each day to help manage and minimize the spread of this disease.

Undoubtedly, people will similarly be inconvenienced by limiting access to our courts. Landlords, debt collectors, and even our clients will have to wait longer for their day in court. But this is a small price to pay for the good of our community, and there is no more profound statement we can make about democracy than by performing what our governor today called "extraordinary acts." We encourage our judicial leadership statewide to take steps to ensure our justice system isn't compromised through this pandemic.

*Media contact: Maria Duvuvuei (330) 907-4405 [mduvuvuei@communitylegalaid.org](mailto:mduvuvuei@communitylegalaid.org)*

---

Printed: March 29, 2020

<http://www.communitylegalaid.org/node/1239/legal-aids-statement-re-courts-actions-amid-coronavirus>

©Community Legal Aid