



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

*Federal Coordination and Compliance Section
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530*

August 21, 2020

Honorable Geoff Moulton
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts
601 Commonwealth Avenue Suite 1500
P.O. Box 61260
Harrisburg, PA 17106-1260

Re: Complaint Nos. DJ 171-64-17 and 171-64-18

Dear Judge Moulton:

I am pleased to notify you that the U.S. Department of Justice, through the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section of the Civil Rights Division (DOJ), has determined that the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania has fulfilled the terms of the April 24, 2017 [memorandum of understanding](#) that resolved our review of the above-noted administrative complaints filed under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C (together, Title VI). Through this letter, we are closing the files on this matter and completing our engagement.

The UJS has made meaningful improvements in its policy and capacity to provide limited English proficient individuals with meaningful access to court proceedings, programs, and services. While my office was gathering information on the language access complaints we had received, the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts decided to clarify court policy to conform with Title VI and then hired an experienced attorney to manage statewide improvements to the court system to implement the revised policy. With input from a productive advisory committee appointed by the state Supreme Court as well as feedback from DOJ, AOPC devised a comprehensive Language Access Plan that was issued in March 2017 and set forth the timelines and areas of work required to implement the changed policy. The next month, we signed the MOU which defined deliverables, called for appointment of the Monitoring and Implementation Team, and outlined the relationship between AOPC and DOJ as the LAP was implemented.

The timelines and actions set forth in the LAP and MOU in a system as large and complex as the UJS naturally required adjustment in practice, and of course, no one could have predicted the massive disruption to the court system resulting from the pandemic. The necessary revisions were discussed and made. The agreed upon deliverables have been completed, and AOPC is committed to work on further improvements. The recently expanded MET will continue to meet and focus on expanding translation of forms and other written materials.

Trainings of staff and judges will continue, as will outreach. Complaints will be monitored and other feedback on performance sought out.

My staff has reported on many occasions that the appointment of Mary Keane Vilter as the AOPC Access Officer was crucial to the successful resolution of the case. Her subject matter expertise and prior experience as an AOPC attorney, combined with her dogged diligence and temperament made countless meetings with her productive and pleasurable. Likewise, AOPC Assistant Chief Counsel Geri Romanello St. Joseph provided substantive and collegial input especially regarding important issues of jurisdiction and relationship among the many UJS components.

This letter relates only to the complaints referred to above. It should not be construed as a finding that the UJS is in full compliance with Title VI or other federal laws, nor is it intended to address other potential claims of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in relation to the activities of the UJS. This letter also does not affect any rights that the complainants may have to file a private lawsuit regarding the concerns raised in their complaints to DOJ. We will retain the complaints for our records and take the information provided into account if we receive similar future complaints against the UJS.

We remind you that recipients of federal financial assistance may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, or engage in other discriminatory conduct against anyone who has either acted or participated in an action to secure rights protected by the civil rights laws DOJ enforces. The protection against retaliation extends to recipient employees who provide information or otherwise cooperate with DOJ's review. Any individual who alleges such harassment or intimidation may file a complaint with DOJ. We would investigate such a complaint if the situation warrants.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release information, related correspondence, and records shared by recipients and complainants upon request. In the event that we receive such a request, we will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information that, if released, could constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

Thank you for your cooperation in resolving this matter. If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact attorney Paul M. Uyehara at paul.uyehara@usdoj.gov or (202) 305-9813.

Sincerely,



Christine Stoneman
Principal Deputy Chief, performing duties as Chief

cc: Geri Romanello St. Joseph, Assistant Chief Counsel
Mary Keane Vilter, Esq., Access Officer