

FRANKLIN COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

373 South High Street
(614) 645-8980

12th Floor
(614) 525-3194

Columbus, Ohio 43215
Fax (614) 461-6470

December 2, 2015

Administrative Judge Kim A. Browne
Franklin County Court of Common Pleas
Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch
373 S. High Street, 6th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Honorable Judge Browne:

The Franklin County Public Defender Office is pleased to offer this letter of support for the Court's proposal to increase the number of Judges on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch Bench.

Data clearly indicates that while Franklin County has and is still experiencing population growth, there has been no corresponding increase in judgeships. Recently it was brought to my attention that currently there are 242,453 citizens in Franklin County per judge (domestic and juvenile combined) compared to Cuyahoga with 114,832 citizens per judge (domestic and juvenile combined) and Hamilton County with 160,904 per judge (domestic and juvenile combined). The gross disparity between the number of judges available and the number of children and families to be served often results in unnecessary and prolonged detentions, lengthy court delays, and excessive cost.

One area that an increase in judgeships would particularly benefit the families that we serve, is on Motions filed for Permanent Custody. Due to judicial shortages and time constraints, many of these cases are assigned to Visiting Judges when it would be preferable to have these cases heard by the elected official who was originally assigned. An increase in judgeships would also benefit children and families in crisis by increasing the availability and flexibility of judges to timely preside over detention/shelter care hearings, hold Objection hearings, and issue written decisions in those contested matters where the decision was taken under advisement.

Franklin County serves a widely diverse population including urban and suburban demographics, as well as many within our community who only speak English as a second language. As an organization whose mission is to provide comprehensive legal and social work services to indigent individuals charged with offenses in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System, the Franklin County Public Defender Office wholeheartedly supports your effort to increase the number of judges in Juvenile Court to a number more representative of the size and complexity of the population served.

Sincerely,



Yeura R. Venters

Franklin County Public Defender