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## Supreme Court Outlines Action Plan for Equal Justice

The New Jersey Supreme Court today outlined a series of reforms it will seek to accomplish within the next year in order to eliminate disparities within the court system and remove institutional obstacles to justice.

[The Action Plan for Ensuring Equal Justice](#) comes just over a month after a June 5 statement from the state Supreme Court in which the Court renewed its commitment to “answer the challenge of ensuring that all men and women, especially people of color, are offered the same opportunity and treatment by the court system.”

“The New Jersey Supreme Court recognizes that this effort will require continued long-term commitment, dedication, and focus to institute lasting change,” Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said. “Today, the Court announces an action plan to implement concrete steps designed to eliminate systemic barriers to equality.”

The action plan identified nine reforms that would:

- **support juror impartiality** by implementing policies and protocols so that juror orientation, model jury charges, jury selection questions and the juror selection process include a focus on impartiality and implicit bias.
- **reduce timeframes for post-dispositional supervision** for persons on probation supervision, such as graduates of the Drug Court Program and Intensive Supervision Program, to ensure that supervisory terms are tailored to provide maximum benefit without prolonging court involvement that does not contribute to rehabilitation.
- **support juvenile rehabilitation** by examining options for retroactively rescinding and prospectively eliminating court-imposed punitive fines and penalties for juveniles where appropriate.
- **require anti-bias Continuing Legal Education** for judges and attorneys.

- **utilize new technology to make the expungement process easier** and improve opportunities for all persons to access expungement resources.
- **enable alternative methods of resolving court matters** to reduce the need for litigants to appear in person at municipal courts.
- **broaden language access resources** to provide more detailed guidance on interpreting services for remote court proceedings.
- **reexamine access to court records** that create inappropriate hardships for disadvantaged populations, such as landlord/tenant complaint filings that do not note the outcome of the matter.
- **improve the landlord/tenant process** by providing plain language information to tenants and landlords about claims and defenses, and engaging judges in focused review of settlement agreements, especially those involving self-represented litigants.

The Court also committed its continued support for critical Judiciary initiatives that have confronted pervasive barriers to justice, such as municipal court reform; juvenile justice reforms, including the Juvenile Detention Alternative (JDAI) program; Criminal Justice Reform; jury selection reform; the transformation of Probation Services; and continued efforts to leverage technology in order to allow all citizens to access the court system.

The Judiciary also will continue to collaborate with the Legislative and Executive branches where appropriate on legislation that impacts access and fairness in the justice system, including a reexamination of the jury selection process, mental health initiatives, juvenile justice reforms, sentencing reforms and other issues that affect institutional bias and equality.

The Court acknowledges the exemplary work of the Administrative Office of the Courts and its director, Judge Glenn A. Grant, in particular, in the development of this action plan.

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