

After speaking with Stephanie Lorentz, I add the following concerns and request they be shared with the committee:

1. If we are going to have child support and probate appeals go directly to the Supreme Court, we really need to beef up the Probate Court at the local level. At the very least, we should make this a formal judicial appointment rather than an elected office.
2. If we are going to have child support appeals go to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court will become so inundated with cases, it is bound to have an impact on the Court's ability to timely hear all appeals. Unless there is something in place that lets these cases be heard in a timely manner, we imagine it will take longer for litigants to get to the end of the appellate road, not a shorter amount of time.
3. We are concerned about access to justice for pro se litigants who do not understand they need an attorney for complex cases. We believe it is better to have the de novo appeal to the civil division for this reason.
4. Right now it is possible for an attorney to represent litigants at the probate court level for a cost that is significantly lower than it would be if probate court worked like family court: there is no full blown discovery process, no big motion practice. If this change is made, probate court will become something other than what it is now, and people who need to access the system will be the ones to lose out.

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