

TO: Representative Kitty Toll, Chair House Committee on Appropriations
Representative Mary Hooper, Member House Committee on
Appropriations
FROM: Representative Maxine Grad, Chair House Judiciary Committee
DATE: 3/1/17
RE: Judiciary Committee's Input and Response to Your Memo

The Judiciary Committee has reviewed the following three items that are before your committee and have the following recommendations, keeping in mind the priorities set by our Committee for the year:

- Addressing the disparities of geographic justice,
- Assuring access to treatment courts statewide, and
- assuring quicker and closer access to treatment for Vermonters in need.

1) \$137,952 for 3 new positions

The Judiciary Committee does not recommend this funding at this time. While the Committee is supportive of the judicial masters concept, we wanted to wait and see what the impact of the new judge that is about to start is on the dockets, as we have heard from several witnesses that the CHINS docket has decreased some. Also, while the judicial master would be beneficial for the expansion of treatment court, until the courts want to move ahead with this expansion, the appropriation did not seem urgent, and would be contingent on the roll out of the treatment docket expansion.

2) \$264,234 for GAL program

While the Committee recognizes the importance of this program, we do not recommend increased funding at this time and recommend that there be adequate time to see how the St. Albans pilot project goes and the outcomes and efficiencies of trying this new approach before appropriating additional funding.

3) \$200,000 additional grant funding for Pre-trial Services

The Judiciary Committee is excited about the AG's office running this program and their recent move to redeploy a vacant position to the diversion unit, which oversees the pre-trial services. At this point in time, the Judiciary Committee does not support an increase for the grant funding as was requested, and will be eager to see the outcomes of the Pre-trial services program in accomplishing its original goals of reducing incarceration and court costs, before further investment in the program.

3) We do support the need for additional security, so that the Judiciary can be confident that each of our courts are useable and safe, but understand that another committee may be looking more broadly at safety issues.

4) We also support Judiciary getting new case management software, and understand that another committee will be overseeing these projects and funding.

5) We support the need to spend the funding that was estimated (approximately \$400,000-\$900,000) for the reclassification of positions per the collective bargaining that occurred for docket clerks, court security officers and related positions. We understand that this is a commitment and non-negotiable.