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Date: August 1, 2023

To: Mr. Joseph Parisi, Dane County Executive
Mr. Greg Brockmeyer, Director, Dane County Department of Administration
Mr. Charles Hicklin, Dane County Controller

From: Carlo Esqueda, Dane County Clerk of Circuit Court/ Register in Probate

Re: 2024 Circuit Courts Budget Submission

This 2024 budget request comports with the requirements and direction provided by the Dane County judiciary, in accordance with Supreme Court Rules 70.19(3)(k) and 70.32.

Our annual budget review was conducted by Chief Deputy Shelly Maas, Accounting Assistant Molly Zenner, and myself, with additional input from the Dane County Judiciary. Our submission is compliant with the Executive's budget guidance of June 7, 2023.

Our first Decision Item adds \$2,700 to our contract with Behavioral Consultants, Inc. This organization works with juveniles with pending delinquency cases who have been identified as having competency issues, but are determined to be educable to competency. BCI works with these juveniles to restore competency via educational programming. The increase is prompted by inflationary pressures to the operation of the program, including a recent moderate increase in the hourly compensation of the program staff. This will bring this point-of-service contract to \$26,252. This program has existed in its present form for two years.

The next Decision Item requests a \$20,000 increase to our Court Interpreter line to address the fact that freelance certified court interpreters have recently been increasing their contractual hourly rates and adjusting their cancellation policies resulting in greater costs to the court for retaining their services.

The next Decision Item also impacts the Court Interpreter line, adding \$30,000 in recognition of the fact that our two .5 FTE interpreters have been receiving compensation increases over the years with no commensurate increases to the interpreter line from which their services are charged back from by the Department of Administration. This \$30,000 increase is offset by a \$15,000 decrease in each of the expense lines for witness fees and court reporter expenses. Please note that the Court Interpreter line has been static since 2013.

Our next Decision Item adds \$2,600 to our long-established service contract with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), which is affiliated with the Canopy Center. This organization has served the juvenile court well over many years, providing an independent voice for children who are under the legal protection of the court due to abuse or neglect. The increase is prompted by simple inflationary pressures to the operation of the program. This will bring this point-of-service line to \$57,060. It has been five years since the last adjustment to this contract.

Our final Decision Item adds \$60,000 to our Guardian Ad Litem Project. This is a long-established contract with attorneys who are willing to take GAL appointments in juvenile and adult guardianship matters, as well as juvenile court matters such as CHIPS cases. It has been six years since the last adjustment to this contract. In the absence of this cost-saving program, the court would be obliged to pay all appointed GALs at the hourly rate of \$100 as established by Supreme Court Rule 81.02.

The Executive's budget guidance advised against the creation of any new positions, and we have honored that request with our formal submission. Nevertheless, I want to bring to your attention two areas in which enhanced staffing has been identified as a need by our office.

First, our office has long employed a Roving Clerk—a court clerk trained across our three rotations, as well as to provide coverage for juvenile and adult court initial appearances, jury selection, and the processing of appeals. This support is crucial to providing coverage to court processes in the event of absences. Over the past few years, our coverage needs have only increased. This is due to moving from six to eight criminal branches, as well as the maturation of our workforce, resulting in more scheduled time off, as well as more instances of FMLA benefit claims. We hope the Executive will consider authorizing an additional 1.0 FTE Roving Clerk, as this will enhance our ability to keep our courts running smoothly and efficiently. It should also be noted that we frequently rely upon Clerk IIIs who successfully cross-train in the Court Clerk's duties to provide coverage, but this comes at the cost of Acting Class Pay expenditures. The cost of a Roving Clerk is \$102,700.

Finally, we hope the Executive will consider adding a 1.0 FTE certified Spanish language interpreter position (this would likely be part of the DOA budget, as our two existing .5 FTE interpreters are DOA staff, despite working exclusively out of our office). As noted above, we have two .5 FTE interpreters working out of our office, and their time is stretched thin as more interpretive services are needed (they also find and schedule freelance court interpreters for many other languages, in addition to Spanish). Having an additional interpreter on staff to cover court will reduce our reliance on the freelancers, with these costs expected to continue to increase over time. The cost of an interpreter is \$102,700, but it is important to note that the time this position would spend in court is subject to partial reimbursement from the Director of State Courts Office. We anticipate receiving at least 26% of the cost of the position to be reimbursable, so the actual cost of the position would be \$76,000. We could realize additional savings if the position spends more time engaged in court interpretation than we now predict.

We hope you will see enough merit in these proposals so that you may recommend making them prerogatives for your 2024 Executive Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of our 2024 budget submission.

c: Presiding Judge Frank Remington
District Court Administrator Amber Peterson
District Attorney Ismael Ozanne
Sheriff Calvin Barrett
County Board Chair Patrick Miles
Supervisor Richelle Andrae, Chair, Public Protection and Judiciary Committee
Chief Deputy Clerk of Circuit Court Shelly Maas