Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 29, 2022

Contact: Barry Massey, public information officer
bmassey@nmcourts.gov
505-470-3436

Chief Justice to highlight New Mexico eviction prevention efforts at White House summit

SANTA FE – Supreme Court Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon will speak next week at a White House event on eviction prevention initiatives in cities and states. The Chief Justice will highlight a court-based program phased in across New Mexico.

The White House summit on eviction prevention reform will be held virtually Tuesday, Aug. 2, starting at 10:30 a.m. MT.

"The Eviction Prevention and Diversion program offers help to tenants and landlords, lessening the risk that financially vulnerable New Mexicans will lose their housing," said Chief Justice Bacon. "At the outset of an eviction case, the program works with people to seek emergency rental assistance. Those who applied with the help of the program had a nearly 80 percent success rate in receiving some form of housing assistance, and this was before the program was fully implemented in all 33 counties of New Mexico."

The program's staff – called navigators – reach out to tenants and landlords shortly after the filing of an eviction case. They help people complete applications for federally funded assistance available from the state for rent, utilities and housing relocation. The program provides information about upcoming court hearings in an eviction proceeding and the availability of trained settlement facilitators to enable landlords and tenants to resolve their disputes over unpaid rent potentially without an eviction. Eviction cases are put on hold temporarily when parties agree to settlement negotiations with a facilitator.

Tenants, landlords and other parties in 2,400 eviction cases were contacted 4,100 times through the program – by telephone, email and text messages – during its first five months although not yet operating in all parts of New Mexico.

The court-based program was developed collaboratively with input from courts, state agencies, property owners, housing advocates, providers of legal services and local governments. It is one part of New Mexico's effort to use federal funding from the American Rescue Plan's Emergency

Rental Assistance Program to ease financial hardships during the continuing pandemic and help people avoid homelessness.

According to the Department of Finance and Administration, the New Mexico Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), has awarded $148 million and aided more than 44,000 households.

The state-administered ERAP provides funding to New Mexico Legal Aid to assist with housing stability and eviction prevention, including helping people maintain housing vouchers, reducing a person's liability for back and future housing expenses and negotiating more time for people to move after an eviction.

The Eviction Prevention and Diversion Program also was started with funding from the state's allocation of federal emergency rental assistance. The Administrative Office of the Courts oversees the program and services are provided through a contractor.

Under a Supreme Court order, the Eviction Prevention and Diversion Program was phased in starting in February in two counties and then expanded to additional counties each month. The program began operating statewide in July, when it took effect in McKinley, San Juan, Cibola, Sandoval and Valencia counties.

Early in the pandemic in March 2020, the Supreme Court paused evictions for tenants who provided a judge with sufficient evidence of their inability to pay rent during the pandemic. The moratorium on eviction orders was lifted in counties as the Eviction and Prevention Diversion Program began operating there.

Press wishing to cover the White House summit –Building on Emergency Rental Assistance to Ensure Long-Term Eviction Reform – should click here to register.

###

Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon