

Open Letter to the Members of the Bar

**By Hon. John D. Casey, Chief Justice of the Probate and Family Court
March 20, 2020**

As I write to you, I am once again amazed by and grateful for the judges, court staff, and attorneys that have dedicated their careers to the Probate and Family Court.

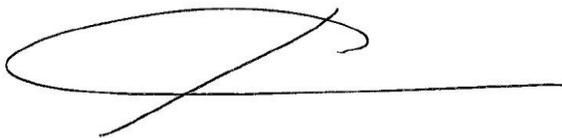
This last week has been tumultuous. As you know, the Probate and Family Court issued Standing Order 1-20 on Saturday, March 14, 2020, and then to respond to changing conditions issued Standing Order 2-20 on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. Standing Order 2-20 limits court access to emergency situations only. We know this is difficult for you as attorneys, and challenging for you to explain to your clients. However, by all accounts, you have risen to the occasion. In addition to those attorneys who have reached out to me and the Administrative Office staff, I have heard back from many of the First Justices that you have been accommodating, understanding and generous. You have offered to help now, and, in the future. Thank you. I cannot say thank you enough. I have no doubt that we will continue to work together to make the Probate and Family Court Department a model for others to emulate by standing together to make sure the business of the Probate and Family Court is handled, and handled well.

Under Standing Order 2-20, our courthouses are closed to the public, except for emergency matters as they are outline in Standing Order 2-20. Each division of the Probate and Family Court is responsible for developing a plan to implement Standing Order 2-20. If you have not yet received information from a particular division, the information will be coming in short order.

Moving from the courthouses and courtrooms we have known for years to telephonic and videoconference hearings will not come without challenges. But I know now, even more than I did just a few short weeks ago, that we are in this together and working hard to make this transition as easy as we can for everyone. In the words of Vince Lombardi, “Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work.” In our case, it is what makes the Probate and Family Court work.

The situation we are facing is unlike any that we have dealt with before, and it is evolving. As the situation changes, I will keep you informed. Yesterday, Chief Justice Gants released a letter to members of the bar (<https://www.mass.gov/news/letter-to-the-bar-from-supreme-judicial-court-chief-justice-ralph-d-gants>). I encourage you to read it. It embodies all that I want to say to you. Again, thank you for all that you are doing for your clients and your dedication to the Probate and Family Court so that we may continue to serve with dignity and fairness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John D. Casey', written over a horizontal line.

John D. Casey
Chief Justice