

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HALIFAX

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
FILE NO.: 20R150

In Re:

HALIFAX COUNTY PROCEDURES
FOR RESUMPTION OF JURY TRIALS

NOW COMES the undersigned Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and Coronavirus Coordinator for the Six-A Judicial District and enters this Administrative Order to establish special procedures for the conduct of jury trials in District 6A during the Covid-19 pandemic. This Order shall take effect upon approval of this Plan for Resumption of Jury Trials in the 6A Superior Court Judicial District by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court or her designee.

WHEREAS, the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court suspended jury trials in the State of North Carolina effective March 16, 2020, due to the State of Emergency declaration by the Governor of the State of North Carolina.

WHEREAS, conditions during the current pandemic necessitate special protective procedures be established for the resumption of jury trials in the Superior and District Courts in the 6A Superior Court Judicial District.

WHEREAS, the Emergency Directives pertaining to COVID-19 and orders of the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court direct the Senior Residents of the Superior Court to prepare a Resumption of Jury Trials Plan for each district.

The undersigned Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and COVID-19 Coordinator hereby submit this Resumption of Jury Trials Plan for the 6A Superior Court Judicial District. This plan has been developed in consultation with the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, the Chief District Court Judge, the elected Clerk of Superior Court, the elected District Attorney, the elected Sheriff of Halifax County (or the designee of each such elected official), the COVID-19 Coordinator, and the District Bar President.

A. HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES IN THE COURTHOUSE

Prior to June 1, 2020, and continuously since that time, local court officials have been constantly working to monitor and provide for the safety of court personnel and other persons having occasion to enter the Halifax County Courthouse. Safety measures have been implemented and will continue in place during the resumption of jury trials include the following:

1. Temperature checks. All persons entering the building, including court personnel, are required to enter through the main entrance and undergo a body temperature check with a touchless thermometer before being allowed to enter.
2. No persons shall be allowed into the Courthouse if they are symptomatic of COVID-19.
3. Face coverings are mandatory for persons entering the building. Please see attached order of this court dated June 26, 2020. (Exhibit 1) Any individual required to enter the courthouse facility for participation in a court proceeding who does not have an appropriate face-covering shall be provided with an appropriate face covering by security personnel when entering the courthouse facility.
4. Warning signs are posted at each entrance pursuant to Emergency Directive 2 of the Chief Justice directing that any person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 should not enter the courthouse. Under Emergency Directive 2, a person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 is defined as any person who:
 - a. Has traveled internationally within the preceding 14 days;
 - b. Is experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath;
 - c. Has been directed to quarantine, isolate, or self-monitor;
 - d. Has a known exposure to COVID-19;
 - e. Has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

- f. Resides with or has been in close contact with any person in the above-mentioned categories.
- 5. Hand Sanitizer dispensers are placed in all public access areas and areas where court business is to be conducted, in addition to hand sanitizer being made available in the courtrooms. The use of hand sanitizer is encouraged at the beginning of each new appearance before the court.
- 6. Public areas are marked with tape to indicate appropriate social distancing in all public access areas. Seating in each courtroom is marked for appropriate spacing that provides a distance of 6 feet between all seated persons in all directions.
- 7. The courtroom seats, including all juror seats, will be cleaned during each lunch recess and the overnight recess. The witness stand, Bible, and microphone shall be cleaned/sanitized between each witness. A container of disinfecting wipes will be placed at or near the witness stand to facilitate cleaning/sanitizing the witness stand, Bible, and microphone.
- 8. Courtroom bailiffs and other security personnel will actively monitor persons in the courthouse to ensure compliance with requirements for face coverings, social distancing, and watch for any signs of symptoms that could be indicative of COVID-19.

B. CALENDAR MANAGEMENT AND CASE SELECTION FOR TRIAL ORDER

The authority for the calendaring of criminal cases lies with the district attorney pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 7A-49.4 and shall continue to do so in this district, subject to the following provisions. During the first 90 days after the Chief Justice's orders allow for the resumption of jury trials, criminal cases selected for trial shall be prioritized by the district attorney, in consultation with one or more senior members of the criminal defense bar, subject to final approval by the senior resident superior court judge and the COVID-19 coordinator.

- 1. In conducting the prioritization of criminal cases as described above, consideration shall be given to the following factors:

- a. The extent to which a jury trial of the case can be conducted with safety for the health of all participants;
 - b. The readiness of the case for trial, as determined by counsel for each party;
 - c. The age of the case;
 - d. Whether or not the defendant remains in custody pending trial;
 - e. The complexity, number of parties, and expected length of trial;
 - f. The consent, or lack thereof, of the defendant and defense counsel to proceed to trial at this time, particularly with respect to legitimate concerns over health and safety or the likelihood of unfairness arising from special precautions involved in the court proceeding.
2. The first jury trial shall be a case agreed upon by the prosecutor and defense counsel as being a case that is ready for trial, appropriate under the circumstance, one that will be relatively straightforward, likely to be completed within 3 days or less, not likely to require multiple bench conferences for ruling on sensitive issues or otherwise subject the jury to extended periods of waiting.
3. It is anticipated that the first jury trials set for hearing in this district shall be civil cases, lower-level felonies (e.g., Class H or I), or misdemeanor appeals expected to take less than one week to try. No complex civil case, high-level felony case (e.g., Class B2 or higher, absent consent of the parties), or any case expected to require multiple weeks for trial shall be calendared within the first 90 days after the date specified by the Chief Justice for the resumption of jury trials except upon consent of all parties to the case and the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge.
4. During the first 90 days after the Chief Justice's orders allow for the resumption of jury trials, District Court civil cases selected for trial shall be approved by the Presiding District Court Judge and the COVID-19 Coordinator.

C. JURY SUMMONS

1. All summons issued to prospective jurors shall include information stressing the importance of jury service and detailing the protective measures that have been undertaken to help ensure the safety of those persons summoned for jury duty.
2. All prospective jurors shall be provided with the Official Jury Summons (Exhibit 2) along with a copy of the Jury Service Deferral Request During COVID-19 (Exhibit 3) form and letter from the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge (Exhibit 4).
3. Jurors seeking to have their service excused or deferred may do so in one of the following manners:
 - a. By completing and signing the Jury Service Deferral Request During COVID19 form and mailing the same to the Jury Clerk at the address designated in the summons; or
 - b. By completing and signing the Jury Service Deferral Request During COVID19 form and emailing the same to the jury clerk at the e-mail address designated in the summons; or
 - c. By completing and signing the Jury Service Deferral Request During COVID19 form and faxing the same to the jury clerk at the fax number designated in the summons.
4. The clerk shall submit all requests for excuse or deferral to either the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or District Court Judge and shall notify the juror of the Court's decision on the request for excuse or deferral.

D. JURY POOL

1. The Clerk will summon 70 potential jurors to appear at 9:00 a.m. on Monday (or the first day of the session if Monday is a holiday) for selection. A 40% compliance rate is assumed to reach the desired number of 30 potential jurors to arrive and be prepared to serve. The

Clerk will conduct jury check-in and orientation from 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. In the event more than 30 potential jurors arrive, the number of jurors over 30 will be randomly drawn from the pool and released for the day and directed to return on Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m., unless otherwise directed when the juror calls the jury information number after 5:30 p.m. The Court will address the jury panel at 10:00 a.m., and jurors will take their oath.

2. The Clerk will summon 40 jurors to appear at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday (or the second day of the session if Monday is a holiday) for selection. A 40% compliance rate is assumed to reach the desired number of 15 potential jurors to arrive and be prepared to serve. The Clerk will conduct jury check-in and orientation for the new jurors from 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. In the event more than 15 potential jurors arrive, the number of jurors in excess of 15 will be randomly drawn from the pool and released for the morning and directed when to return or call back.
3. In the event a larger pool of jurors is required for a particular session, the above procedure will be repeated each morning at 9:00 a.m. to reach the desired number of jurors. In the event either party believes it will be necessary to summon a larger pool of jurors, the party requesting a larger pool of jurors shall notify the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and Jury Clerk as to the need for additional jurors at least 6 weeks in advance of the beginning of the session.

E. JURY SELECTION

1. The jury box in the Superior Courtroom will be modified by repositioning the half wall now existing to allow for 14 socially distanced seats to be positioned within the jury box. Plexiglass will be hung in a manner to allow for a 30" x 30" piece of Plexiglass to be on each side of each juror's seat. The remainder of the courtroom shall remain as currently arranged. There will be added a marking on the floor beyond which any attorney arguing before the jury may not exceed. This marking will be 6 ft from the front jury row and the repositioned half wall.
2. Once the jury is empaneled they shall receive a disposable juror badge. Each morning each juror will be issued a new juror badge.

Courtroom 4 shall be marked for seating for jurors to remain 6ft apart during deliberations and during any time they are required to be in the jury room. There shall be a deputy posted outside the front entrance to Courtroom 4 / the jury room to prevent non-jurors from entering. Hand sanitizer, tissues, and one or more lined trash cans shall be placed in the jury room for use by the jurors.

6. **Location.** All jury trials in this district will be held in Courtroom 1 in order to facilitate the above procedure.

G. RESPONSE TO SYMPTOMS, POSITIVE TEST OR EXPOSURE

1. **Daily Health Screenings.** All jurors, court personnel, attorneys, witnesses, and parties shall be screened by County Emergency Medical Services Personnel or security personnel upon entry into the courthouse facility pursuant to the existing Administrative Orders issued in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
2. Any person, including jurors, defendants, attorneys, witnesses, judges, and other courtroom personnel should be healthy, and not symptomatic, before coming to Court.
3. In the event a juror, defendant, attorney, witness, judge, or other courtroom personnel becomes symptomatic, tests positive for COVID-19, or has known exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 during the trial, the following shall occur:
 - a. All information regarding the person, person's symptoms, test results, or exposure shall immediately be reported to the presiding judge, the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, and the COVID Coordinator; and
 - b. The presiding Judge, the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, and the COVID Coordinator shall, as soon as possible, confer with the Public Health Director concerning the individual, as well as the symptoms, test results, and exposure details, and shall thereafter institute the safety recommendations of the Public Health Director resulting from said consultation.

Each juror shall be given an instruction sheet with relevant contact information to enable them to contact the court to report any COVID 19 related issue that arises during their services such as an exposure or COVID19 symptoms which may occur outside of court.

F. TRIAL

1. **Opening statements.** Opening statements shall be given as usual from behind a mark or demarcation on the floor which is 6ft away from the closet juror or opening statements shall be made from a podium placed 6ft away from the jury and counsel may not move therefrom without permission of the court.
2. **Face coverings:**
 - a. Jurors shall wear a face-covering in the circumstances required by Emergency Directive 21 issued by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court on July 16, 2020.
 - b. The Prosecutors and Defense attorneys shall be required to wear a face-covering in the circumstances required by Emergency Directive 21 issued by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court on July 16, 2020.
 - c. Criminal Defendant. The Defendant in a criminal matter shall be required to wear a face-covering in the circumstances required by Emergency Directive 21 issued by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court on July 16, 2020. The Defendant shall, when directed by the Court, remove the Defendant's face covering temporarily for identification purposes. In the event the Defendant in a criminal matter wishes to be exempted from the requirement of wearing a face mask during the trial, a written motion shall be filed and heard before the trial judge prior to the commencement of jury selection.
 - d. Witness. All witnesses shall be required to wear a face-covering in the circumstances required by Emergency Directive 21 issued by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court on July 16, 2020.

- e. The witness box shall be outfitted with plexiglass on three sides to allow the witness to remove their face covering while testifying. After each witness testifies the witness stand will be wiped down with sanitizer.
 - f. Jurors who are selected for a trial will be offered a clear face shield to wear in addition to the face covering. The face shield is not required but is an option for each juror.
 - g. Availability of Face Coverings. Any individual required to enter the courthouse facility for participation in a court proceeding who does not have an appropriate face-covering shall be provided with an appropriate face covering by security personnel when entering the courthouse facility.
3. **Exhibits.** Every effort will be made by the Court and the parties to minimize the passing of evidentiary exhibits from one juror to the next. To the extent possible, exhibits shall be presented to the jury by electronic means (i.e. overhead projector, TV monitor, etc.). In the event presentation to the jury is not possible by electronic means, the party offering said exhibit shall make enough copies of said exhibit so that each juror and alternate juror is provided with their own copy of said exhibit. Each attorney shall provide the court with a complete Exhibit List at the beginning of the trial and shall have all exhibits labeled in advance. The attorney shall provide any witness with his/her own copy while having the witness identify the original through the plexiglass. If the offered exhibit is unique and unable to be copied or presented by electronic means and must be passed from one juror to the next, jurors will be provided with disposable gloves to wear while handling the exhibit.
4. **Bench Conferences.** In order to facilitate social distancing, bench conferences with counsel should occur in the judge's chambers or the unused jury deliberation room.
5. **Jury Assembly.** Once empaneled the jury shall assemble in Courtroom 4 which shall be used as a jury assembly room as well as a jury deliberation room. During jury trials, there will be no admittance allowed to the back hallway between Courtrooms 1 and 4, as to allow the jury use of the restrooms in the now existing jury room.

H. Effective Date

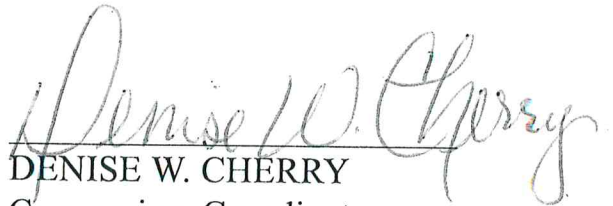
This administrative order shall become effective upon the approval of the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.

This the 30th day of September, 2020.



ALMA L. HINTON

Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

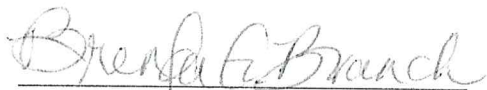


DENISE W. CHERRY

Coronavirus Coordinator

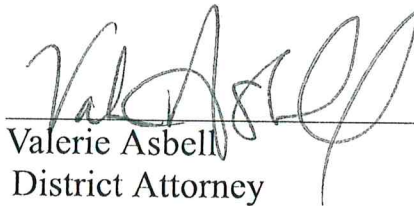
APPROVAL OF LOCAL OFFICIALS

Pursuant to the provisions of Emergency Directive 22 issued by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, the following local officials have reviewed and approved of this Administrative Order Regarding Procedures for Resumption of Jury Trials.



Brenda G. Branch

Chief District Court Judge



Valerie Asbell

District Attorney



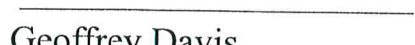
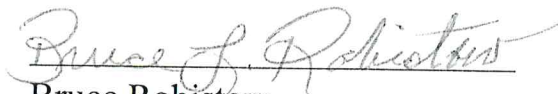
Wes Tripp

Sheriff



Becky Spragins

Clerk of Superior Court


Geoffrey Davis
Criminal Defense Attorney
Bruce Robistow
Public Health Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 26, 2020

Order of the Resident Superior Court Judge of Judicial District 6A, Chief District Court Judge of Judicial District 6 and the District Court Judges of Judicial District 6

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order No. 116 which declared a State of Emergency to coordinate the State's response and protective actions to address the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") public health emergency and provide for the health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors located in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States issued an emergency declaration for all states, tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia, retroactive to March 1, 2020, and the President declared that the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States constitutes a national emergency; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina issued an Order declaring that catastrophic conditions resulting from the public health threat posed by COVID-19 exist in all counties of this State; and

WHEREAS, more than fifty-six thousand people in North Carolina have had laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19, and more than twelve hundred people in North Carolina have died from the disease; and

WHEREAS, in Executive Order No. 141, issued on May 20, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper urged that all people in North Carolina follow social distancing recommendations, including that everyone follow the 3 W's: **WEAR** a cloth face covering, **WAIT** six (6) feet apart and avoid close contact, and **WASH** hands often or use hand sanitizer; and

WHEREAS, face coverings can decrease the spread of respiratory droplets from people, and evidence has grown, showing in numerous recent studies that the use of face coverings decreases the spread of COVID-19 within populations; and

WHEREAS, although the Superior and District Courts remain open, additional action is necessary to reduce the risk of spread of infection throughout the Halifax County Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and thereby to potentially save lives, the undersigned has determined that face coverings must now be required for anyone (over the age of two) to gain entry and to conduct business within the Halifax County Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, some citizens have medical or behavioral health issues, conditions, disabilities, or other reasons that they should be excepted from wearing a face covering, and this Order requires those citizens to submit a request with accompanying documentation to the

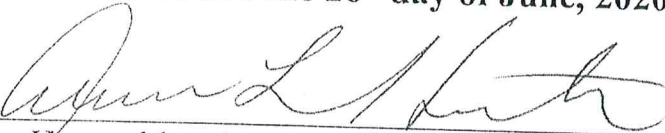
Halifax County Clerk's Office for a judicial review and discretionary determination of whether the citizen qualifies for one of the exceptions to these face covering requirements and should not wear a mask while conducting business at the Halifax County Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the purpose of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the people of Halifax County, the undersigned hereby issue this Order pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes section 7A-39 and pursuant to the inherent judicial authority governing courtroom decorum;

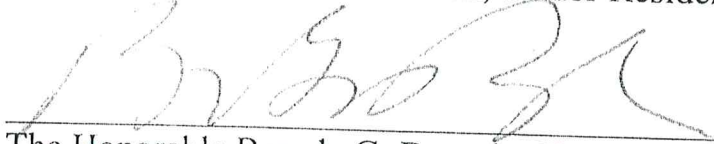
Effective MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2020, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that **Face Coverings** will be required to gain entry and to conduct business within the Halifax County Courthouse. "Face Covering" means a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is simply wrapped around the lower face. A Face Covering may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or can be improvised from appropriate household items such as scarves. A Face Covering may not depict or promote profanity, vulgarity, obscenity, violence or the use of illegal drugs. A Face Shield that covers the nose and mouth also meets the Face Covering requirements of this Order.

Additional orders or directives pursuant to NCGS section 7A-39 and other judicial authority may be entered as necessary to support the continuing operation of essential court functions in a manner that honors the Executive Orders issued by Governor Roy Cooper, the Orders issued by Chief Justice Cheri Beasley and all other relevant statutory and constitutional mandates.

Entered this the 26th day of June, 2020.



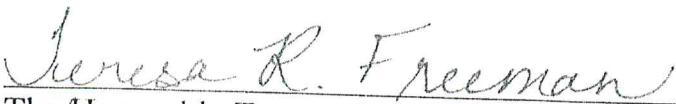
The Honorable Alma L. Hinton, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge



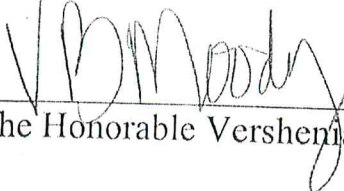
The Honorable Brenda G. Branch, Chief District Court Judge



The Honorable W. Turner Stephenson, District Court Judge



The Honorable Teresa Raquel Robinson Freeman, District Court Judge



The Honorable Vershenja Ballance Moody, District Court Judge

Face Covering Waiver

Date _____

Name _____

Has presented a Doctor's Note / Medical excuse as to why they should not be required to wear a face covering while at the Halifax County Courthouse.

That medical excuse is hereby approved by the undersigned.

____ District Court Judge
____ Superior Court Judge

***** You MUST keep this notice with you at all times while at the Halifax County Courthouse.**

OFFICIAL JURY SUMMONS

Becky Spragins
Clerk of Superior Court

Halifax County Superior Court
357 Ferrell Street
Halifax, NC 27839



Juror First Middle Last
Address Line #1
Address Line #2

Date:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO PERSONALLY APPEAR FOR JURY SERVICE AS FOLLOWS:

Where: Halifax County Courthouse
357 Ferrell Lane
Halifax, NC 27839

Date: _____
Time: _____

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

1. Sign your name on the line below and fill in your current telephone number.
2. Return this form (fully signed) to the Halifax County Clerk of Court in one of the following ways:
 - a. Scan and e-mail this form to: Halifax.Clerk@nccourts.org; OR
 - b. Mail this form to: P.O. Box 66, Halifax, NC 27839; OR
 - c. Fax this form to: 252-593-3001
3. If you wish to request that your jury service be excused or deferred, you will need to fill out the enclosed Jury Service Deferral Request During COVID-19 form and return that completed request to the Halifax County Clerk of Superior Court **along with** this signed summons.
4. If you do not wish to request that your jury service be excused or deferred, you should appear at the Halifax County Courthouse at the date and time specified above to begin your jury service. PLEASE CALL 252-593-3005 after 6:00 p.m. the evening before your service is scheduled to start in order to receive the most up to date information regarding your jury service. Failure to call may result in an unnecessary appearance without pay.

I hereby acknowledge receipt and service of this summons for jury service to begin on the date specified above in Halifax County, North Carolina.

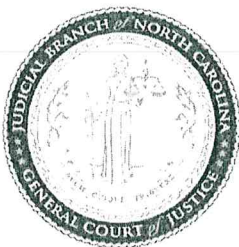
Signature

Phone Number

North Carolina law provides that jury service is the solemn obligation of all qualified citizens. Failure to appear may result in an order for arrest and a fine (pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 9-13).

****Failure to return this form as directed will result in a deputy being dispatched to inquire****

****If there is a grave illness in your family or equally serious problem that would constitute an undue hardship or extreme inconvenience for you to appear in court on the date specified, please call the clerk's office at 252-593-3000****



JUROR COVID-19 SCREENING DOCUMENT

The purpose of this screening document is to assist the Court in protecting the health and safety of jurors throughout jury service. Responses will be used solely for the purpose of determining whether a juror can serve or if service should be deferred; responses to the questions are not public record. You may be contacted by the Court if you answer YES to any of the questions below.

Note to Clerk: This document is not a public record. It should be filed with other confidential juror excuse information that is maintained pursuant to G.S. 9-6(e) and G.S. 9-6.1(b).

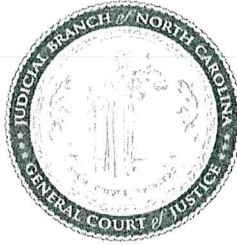
Instructions: Please answer the questions below based on your current health and circumstances as of the date you respond. **Please return this questionnaire by mail no later than five (5) business days before the date upon which you are to appear [OR by (Date)] to _____.**

Juror Name (as it appears on the Juror Summons) _____

Telephone number/email address _____

Date completed _____

1. Have you been diagnosed with/tested positive for COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - o If so, when were you diagnosed/what was the date of your positive test? _____
2. In the past 14 days, have you been exposed to COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - o If so, what is the approximate date of your exposure? _____
3. Have you been directed to quarantine? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - o If so, on what date were you directed to quarantine? _____
4. In the past 14 days, has anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. In the past 14 days, have you been in close contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. In the past 14 days, have you been notified by your county health department that you were or might have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?
☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Have you been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting the test results? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - o If so, on what date were you tested? _____



DAILY JUROR COVID-19 SCREENING DOCUMENT

The purpose of this screening document is to assist the Court in protecting the health and safety of jurors throughout jury service. Responses will be used solely for the purpose of determining whether a juror can serve.

Note to Court: It is recommended that the Court order this document sealed in order to protect juror confidentiality.

Note to Clerk: Sealed documents shall be filed with the minutes of the court.

Juror Name (as it appears on the Juror Summons) _____

Date completed _____

1. Are you currently experiencing COVID-19 symptoms? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Since you last appeared at the courthouse:

2. Have you been diagnosed with/tested positive for COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Have you been exposed to COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Have you been directed to quarantine? ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. Has anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 or been directed to quarantine?
☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Have you been in close contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or have you been notified by your county health department that you were or might have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19? ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Have you been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting the test results? ☐ YES ☐ NO

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that I am the person named on the juror summons, and the information provided is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Juror Signature



ALMA L. HINTON
SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

DENISE W. CHERRY
JUDICIAL ASSISTANT II

JUDICIAL DISTRICT 6A
HALIFAX COUNTY

357 FERRELL LANE, PO BOX 66, HALIFAX, NC 27839
O 252-593-3016 | F 252-593-3013

September 30, 2020

Greetings Prospective Juror,

What a year 2020 has been. I hope this note finds you safe and well. As I'm sure you are aware, we here at the Halifax County Courthouse were compelled to suspend Jury trials during the pandemic. We have slowly and cautiously begun to resume some other operations of the court system and are now ready to resume jury trials. In preparation for the resumption of jury trials, I along, with the Chief District Court Judge Brenda Branch, the Clerk of Superior Court Becky Spragins, the Elected District Attorney Valerie Asbell, the Halifax County Sheriff Wes Tripp, and the Halifax Public Health Director Bruce Robistow, have consulted on a plan to resume jury trials here in Halifax. This plan has been reviewed and approved by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court Cheri Beasley. In drafting this plan, we made your safety and well-being our utmost priority. These efforts include:

- Requiring health screenings before admittance to the courthouse of all people entering the courthouse
- Conducting touchless temperature checks of all people entering the courthouse
- Requiring each person who enters the courthouse to wear a face-covering
- Providing sanitizing stations throughout the courthouse
- Providing a COVID19 Coordinator who constantly monitors the occupants of the courthouse for compliance with the social distancing guidelines
- Ensuring all courtrooms and other public areas of the courthouse are sanitized nightly and during the lunch hour

These things will apply to all areas of the courthouse. However, as it relates to your jury service in the Superior Court, you will note some additional changes. The seats in the courtrooms have been marked to allow for social distancing. Therefore, we have reduced the size of the jury pool. The jury box in the Superior Courtroom has been expanded, plexiglass shields have been placed between jurors and the space between the rows has

been increased. There has been a sheet of plexiglass placed at the front of the jury box as well. One of the smaller courtrooms has been marked for social distancing and will serve as the jury deliberation room so that the jury can be socially distant as they deliberate.

Juror excuse forms should be mailed to Halifax County Clerk of Courts. Hand deliveries of these forms in a sealed envelope may also be made to the Courthouse. If you are unable to mail or hand deliver your juror excuse form to the court on time, you may email your juror excuse form. If you elect to email your juror excuse form, please be aware that you assume all of the risks associated with transmitting any confidential or personal information over email.

Please know as you appear in response to your jury summons that we have made great effort to ensure your safety and comfort as you serve your community.

Sincerely,

Alma L. Hinton
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge