

JACQUILYN JOHNSON TESTIMONY

Hello, my name is Jacquilyn Johnson and I am writing to you today in support of virtual court access. I am a Maryland voter and this issue is incredibly important to me. There is an ongoing global pandemic and we know that it spreads when people gather. We should not be adding to the numbers when we have viable alternative solutions. One of the only good things to have come out of COVID is virtual access to courts, we have learned so much and it would be a disservice to the community to take this valuable resource away.

Even when the pandemic is over, we have learned a lot about staying home when people are sick and also the pandemic has proven that the world is adapting to a more virtual world and the courts and government should evolve with it. Just as people are able to participate in the public process now through testifying to your committee virtually, people should be able to contribute to all of our institutions, especially criminal justice institutions, virtually. As many across the country have worked to keep people out, silence their voices, restrict their voting rights, and roll back protections for participation - this is your opportunity to do the opposite and help us come out of this pandemic together in a more accountable way.

Further, mistrust in government is at an all-time high which does immense damage to our institutions. People simply do not trust what happens behind closed doors in their name to represent them and this legislation will help to avoid the erosion in public trust for not only the criminal justice system but also institutions like yours.

I thank you for the opportunity to be heard through this testimony and I hope that you extend the same opportunity for participation to our criminal justice system. Please support this legislation. Thank you.