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# MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH UPDATE

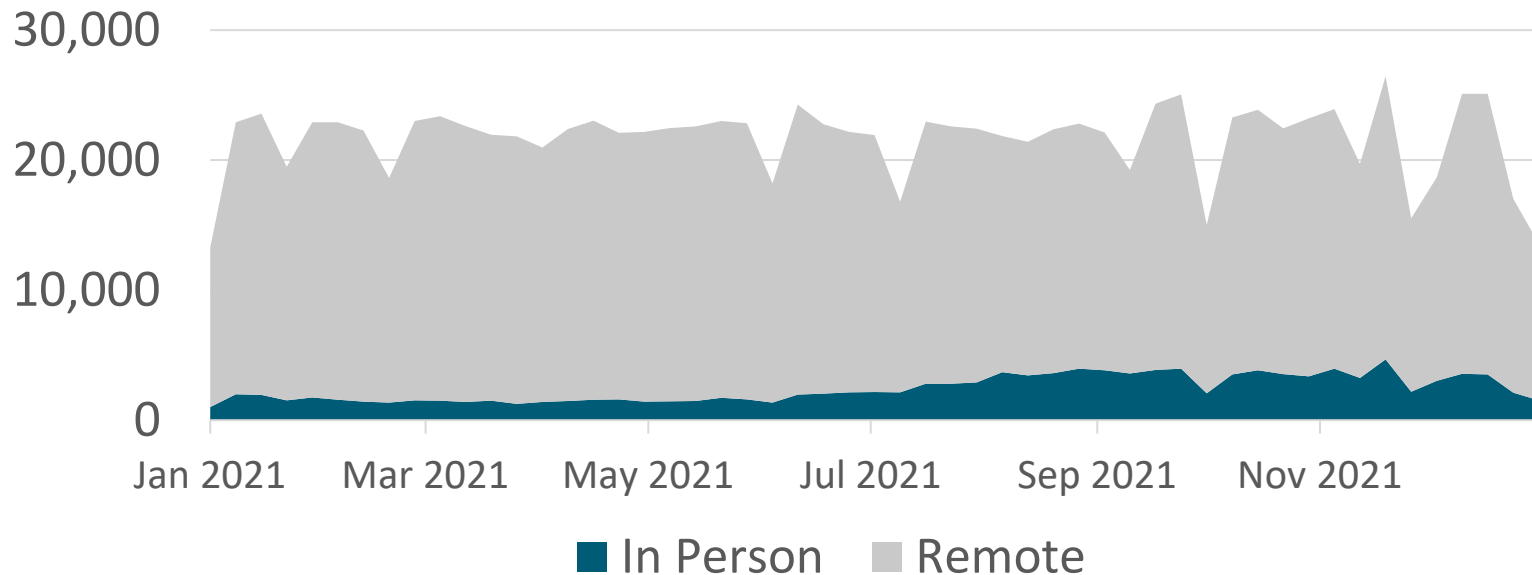
**House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee**

**February 3, 2022**

# Pandemic Response Update

## Vast majority of court hearings remain online

Weekly district court hearings held remote and in person  
January-December 2021



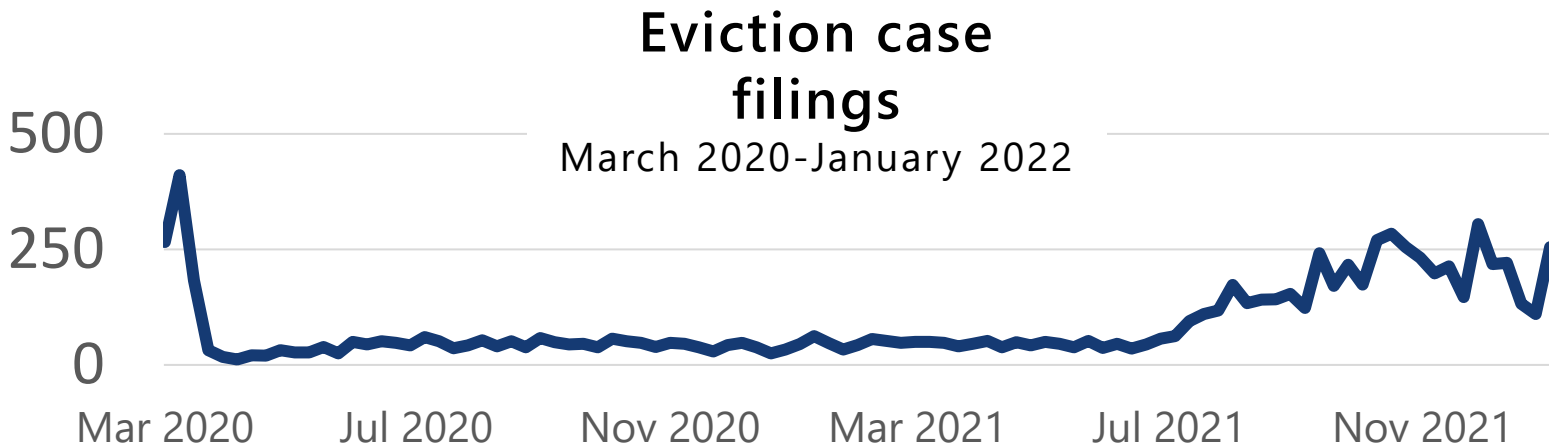
# Pandemic Response Update

## Limited In-Person Court Proceedings

- Priority for in-person hearings is addressing backlog of felony and gross misdemeanor cases
- Also holding in-person hearings for civil jury trials, juvenile delinquency and protection cases, and other high-priority matters
- Each judicial district has flexibility to limit in-person hearings based on local conditions
- Face coverings, distancing measures, and enhanced cleaning protocols required

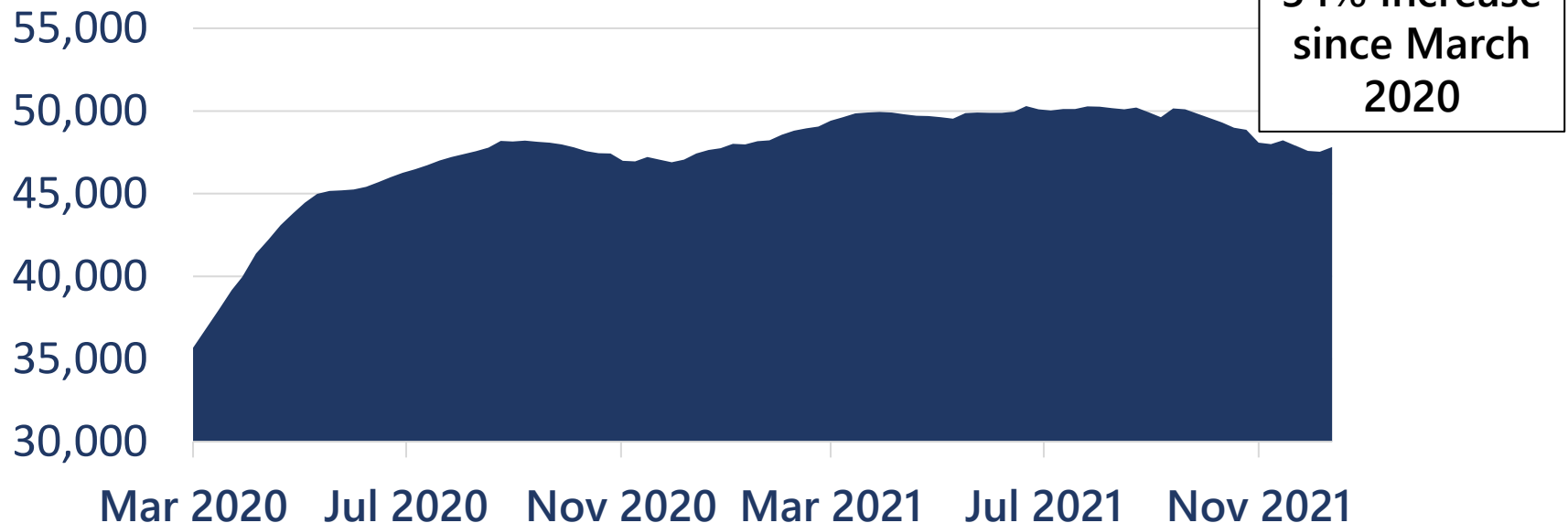
# Evictions Off-Ramp: Current Status

- Eviction filings have rebounded closer to pre-pandemic levels
- Courts successfully managing increased caseload
  - 87% of pending cases have had a hearing held or scheduled



# Pandemic Backlog

## Pending felony and gross misdemeanor cases March 2020-December 2021



# Pandemic Backlog

## Backlog Reduction Strategy

- Each judicial district has developed a localized plan to reduce the backlog of Major Criminal cases
- Secured federal pandemic relief funding to help fund backlog reduction efforts while minimizing impact to other court operations
- Districts utilizing senior judges, referees, temporary staff, special events, and other strategies to reduce backlog
- **Goal:** Reduce Major Criminal case backlog by 20% every four months until pandemic backlog eliminated (est. June 2023)



# CARES and ARP Funding

## **CARES ACT**

\$518,000 – PPE; Courtroom modifications to expanded use of remote technology

\$2,112,516 - Senior judges and support staff to tackle backlogs

- \$639,100 expended

\$5,261,258 - Remote hearing technology, teleworking technology, PPE, and past COVID19 expenses that were not reimbursed to date.

## **ARP**

\$9,961,000 - Referees/senior judges and staff to tackle Major Criminal backlog.

# Future of Remote Hearings

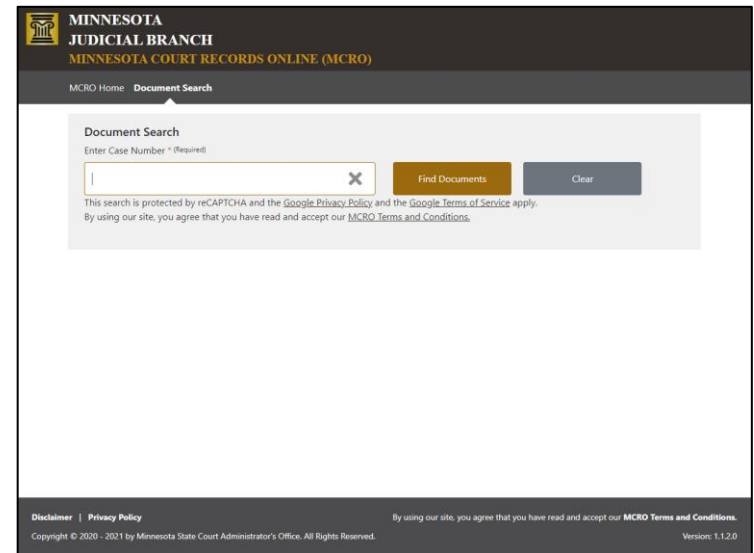
- Remote hearings have not only allowed our courts to safely hear cases during the pandemic, but their use has been widely embraced by judges, court staff, attorneys, justice partners, and litigants
  - Court users like the ease, convenience, and lower cost of attending remote hearings
- The Minnesota Judicial Council has adopted a framework for the long-term (post-pandemic) use of remote hearings, which will take effect once the pandemic subsides
- The Judicial Branch has established a statewide workgroup to oversee implementation of this framework



# Minnesota Court Records Online

## Phase 1

- Provides online access to district court case records and documents
- Phase 1 launched on March 17, 2021
- Access to documents only when searching by case number
- Successful launch:
  - Positive user feedback
  - More than 10,000 case documents downloaded on first day



# Minnesota Court Records Online

## Phase 2

- Phase 2 launched on Dec. 7, 2021
- Added more robust search capabilities and expanded case information
- More than 3 million public case documents have been downloaded through MCRO since its launch

The screenshot displays the 'Case Search' page of the Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO) system. The page header includes the Minnesota Judicial Branch logo and the text 'MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH MINNESOTA COURT RECORDS ONLINE (MCRO)'. Below the header, there are navigation links for 'MCRO Home', 'Case Search', and 'Document Search'. The main search area is titled 'Case Search' and contains several input fields and options: 'Name' (with sub-fields for Case Number, Citation Number, and Attorney Bar Number), 'Select Name Type' (with buttons for Person, Business, and Attorney), and a search input field. Below the search input, there are fields for 'Last Name (Required)', 'First Name (Optional)', and 'Middle Name'. A note indicates that exact names or a wildcard (\*) trailing after two characters return results, and that searching by name may return more results. Below this, there are 'Additional Search Options' including 'Date of Birth' (with 'On' and 'Range' buttons), 'Date Filed' (with 'On' and 'Range' buttons), 'Case Category' (with checkboxes for Civil, Family, and Probate or Mental Health), and 'Case Status' (with a dropdown menu). At the bottom, there are 'Court Locations' (with 'Subcounty' and 'County' buttons) and 'Find' and 'Clear' buttons.

# Minnesota Court Records Online

## Phase 3 (in development)

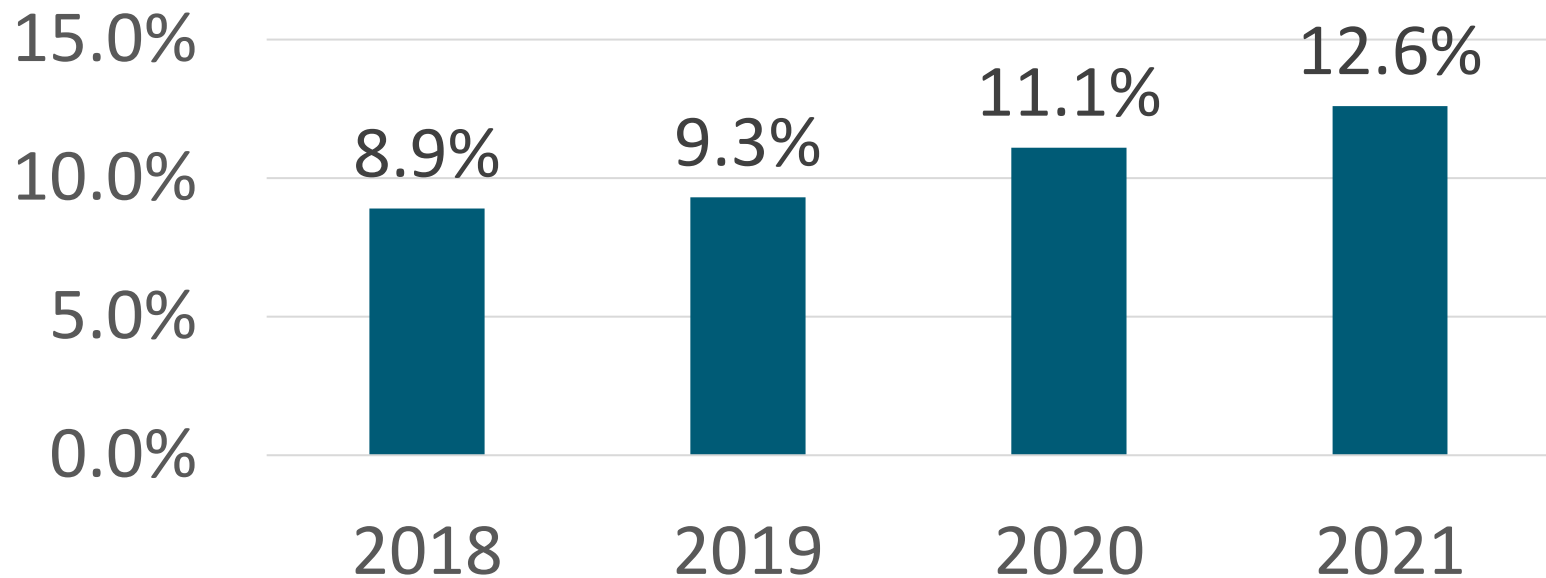
- Final phase; expected launch in 2022
- Adds judgment & hearing search functionality
- With implementation of Phase 3, will begin charging a per-document access fee
  - Can view first page free
  - \$8 to view/download entire document
  - Fee set by state statute, revenue goes to state General Fund

# Other Recent Innovations

- Online public defender application
- Digital exhibit management system
- Online hearing check-in system
- Remote hearing support for individuals with limited technology/internet access
- Expanded online self-help services and resources

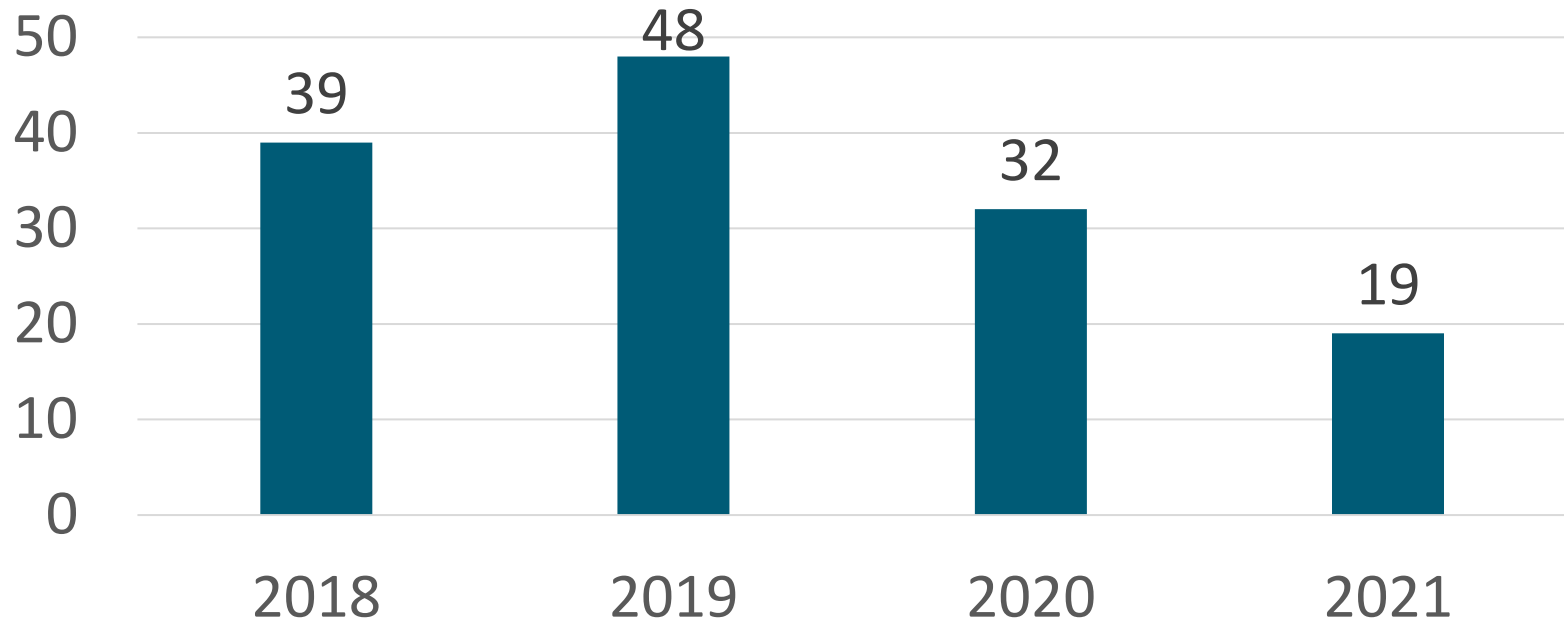
# Workforce Challenges: Retention

Annual MJB Staff Turnover  
2018-2021



# Workforce Challenges: Recruitment

Average Number of Applicants Per Job Posting  
2018-2021



# Workforce Challenges: Compensation

## Judicial Branch salaries falling behind public sector

Salary progression example: Executive Branch vs. Judicial Branch

	Year 1 - FY19		Year 2 - FY20		Year 3 - FY21	
<b>Executive</b>	Merit	ATB	Merit	ATB	Merit	ATB
\$20.00	2.50%	2.00%	2.50%	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%
	\$20.50	\$20.91	\$21.43	\$21.91	\$22.46	<b>\$23.02</b>
<b>Judicial</b>						
\$20.00	2.50%	--	2.50%	--	2.50%	--
	\$20.50		\$21.01		<b>\$21.54</b>	

# FY23 Supplemental Budget Request

## **Seeking \$21.5 million:**

- Increase judge/staff compensation to support recruitment and retention
- Address the increasing costs of providing mandated services, including psychological exams and interpreter services
- Enhance the Judicial Branch's cyber security program



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THANK YOU

Questions?

