



March 25, 2020

*Via email to [Supreme@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Supreme@courts.wa.gov)*

Chief Justice Deborah Stephens  
Washington State Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 40929  
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

Dear Chief Justice Stephens,

Thank you for taking decisive action in Order Number 25700-B-607 to create a uniform and consistent approach to court operations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. TeamChild and Legal Counsel for Youth and Children work with children, youth and young adults across the state. We have been working closely with our legal aid and public defense partners to provide additional guidance to the Court. Our goal is to ensure that the pandemic and state's emergency COVID-19 response do not impair access to the courts or further harm those in Washington State who have been historically marginalized outside of and within our civil, juvenile, and criminal courts.

We support the revisions in the proposed Order that the Northwest Justice Project and others sent to you on March 23, 2020. For children and youth, the recommendations will help to ensure that courts attend to emergency matters that impact their basic needs.

We are writing to recommend that the Supreme Court consider two additional actions:

- 1) Direct all courts statewide to dismiss all pending truancies from the 2019-2020 school year and prior years and suspend any new truancy filings until at least September 2020.
- 2) Direct all courts statewide to suspend state, district and municipal courts' collection of civil and criminal fines and fees, the accrual of interest, and any consequences (like driver's license suspension) through the end of calendar year 2020.

For children, youth and families, even if school resumes before the end of the school year, many students and families will face challenges in resuming educational services. When students are allowed back to school, our collective focus will be better placed on assisting students in catching up on their studies, and not on the truancy court process. Similarly, suspending the collection and interest on court fines and fees would alleviate the economic stressors and reduce further harm to our community.

Thank you for considering these additional recommendations.

Sincerely,

Anne Lee  
Executive Director  
TeamChild

Erin Lovell  
Executive Director  
Legal Counsel for Youth and Children