

The State of New Hampshire

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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Representative David Milz, Chairman
House Public Works and Highways
Legislative Office Building Room 201
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Capital Budget Lapse Extensions

Dear Chairman Milz,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the House Public Works and Highways subcommittee on lapse extensions contained in the New Hampshire Judicial Branch (NHJB) Capital Budget. We understand that the Committee requires more information on the lapse extensions from HB 25 Projects 125, 126, and 127 totaling \$1,379,332.97. Table 1 provides a summary of the current status of capital fund appropriation balances:

Table 1 HB25 Project No.'s 125, 126 and 127 – Current Status of Capital Funds

HB 25 Project No.	HB 25 Project Title	Year	AU	Authority	Project #	Current Status of Funds		
						Encumbered	Available	Total Funds
125	NH e-Court	2021	9325	Laws of 2021; 107:1, VIII, 1 ext. Laws of 2023, 113:24	121	\$671,249.38	\$418,085.18	\$1,089,334.56
126	Courts Digitization	2021	9326	Laws of 2021; 107:1, VIII, 2 ext. Laws of 2023, 113:24	122	\$0.00	\$6,035.00	\$6,035.00
127	NH e-Court	2019	1313	Laws of 2019; 146:1, X, A ext. Laws of 2021; 107:16 ext. Laws of 2023, 113:24	103 123	\$268,233.62	\$15,729.79	\$283,963.41
Total Funds								\$1,379,332.97

We are proposing to expand the purpose of our currently funded Capital Budget projects by renaming project numbers 125 and 127 from their current title of “NH e-Court” to “NH e-Court and Associated Critical Infrastructure” in order to more accurately reflect the nature of the requests for Capital Budget Lapse Extensions. Historically, the focus of NH e-Court was more narrowly related to electronic filing of cases (e-Filing). The Judicial Branch has critical infrastructure Capital funding needs that support the function of NH e-Court but are not directly related to e-Filing. It is of critical importance that the branch provides accurate accounting of how the Capital Budget will be allocated to encompass all of those needs.

Request #1: Review lapse extensions to determine if they are correct (or if they need to be added or removed)

For FY26-27, the Judicial Branch has withdrawn an additional request for \$157,950 in Capital funds to support our court records digitization project and will lapse the remaining \$6,035 in the budget for project No. 126 Courts Digitization, as this project is now completed.

Request #2: Provide a brief update on any projects for which we have requested a lapse extension including anticipated completion date

There are some previously requested Capital Budget initiatives as part of project numbers 125 and 127 that upon further review were deemed not feasible, and the branch is proposing to repurpose those funds for other critical infrastructure needs that support NH e-Court. Therefore, the branch is requesting a lapse extension of funds totaling \$1,373,297.97 contained within the re-titled project numbers 125 and 127 “NH e-Court and Associated Critical Infrastructure” as referenced above. This includes expenses for the following initiatives, as well as other related needs that may arise, that we expect to complete by June 30, 2027:

1. Upgrades to TurboCourt E-Filing System for Self-Represented Litigants

The Judicial Branch will utilize these Capital funds to upgrade the TurboCourt e-Filing system for the thousands of self-represented litigants with cases in both New Hampshire Circuit and Superior Courts. The funds will be dedicated to updating the system to keep current with the latest statutory changes, as well as modifying and enhancing TurboCourt to increase filing efficiency, save time for customers, and improve the user experience.

2. Implement Phase 2 of CaseLines Digital Evidence Platform for Jury Trials

The Judicial Branch implemented the CaseLines Digital Evidence Platform between 2021 and 2024. Phase 1 of the project made CaseLines available for non-jury trials in Superior Court. Phase 2 is currently a pilot program to make CaseLines available for jury trials. The Judicial Branch will use Capital funds to fully launch Phase 2 of the CaseLines implementation to specifically make this digital evidence platform available to parties in all Superior Court jury trials statewide. The funds specifically cover the hardware and equipment needed to complete the full Phase 2 implementation.

3. Upgrade Telax Contact Management System - NH Court Information Center

The NH Court Information Center is a core function of the Judicial Branch, currently processing more than 400,000 inquiries annually from members of the public requesting digital documentation on cases in the Circuit and Superior Courts. The Telax contact management system is used to digitize telephone contacts from individuals inquiring about cases, allowing the contacts to be tracked and archived. The system facilitates the ability of information center customer service representatives to follow up on document requests and preserve records of inquiries by individuals and inquiries on specific cases to improve customer service and reduce redundant efforts in digital document production. The current system, Telax, has been causing disruptions over the last 4 years caused by poor audio and dropped calls, resulting in compliance concerns with

recordings. Customer service and resolution of these issues has been less than satisfactory. Capital funds will be used to upgrade this system.

4. Cloud-Based Hosting Services for e-Filing of Involuntary Admissions

The Judicial Branch launched e-filing of Involuntary Admissions to inpatient psychiatric care (Emergency and Non-Emergency) in 2023 and 2024. Capital funds will be used for implementation of secure, cloud-based hosting for the online system that was set up to handle these electronic filings.

5. Establish Online Payment Portal to Collect Case Fines

These funds will be utilized to set up a secure, cloud-based online portal to collect fines associated with criminal cases. This is a top Access to Justice and E-Court priority to enable defendants to pay fines using their mobile device from any location 24/7, therefore eliminating the time burden associated with the need to physically access a specific courthouse within certain hours in order to resolve a criminal case.

6. Expanding the Digital Courtroom – Audio System Upgrade Phase 1

Audio recording in the more than 130 courtrooms in New Hampshire Circuit and Superior Courts preserves the legal record and is central to the mission of the Judicial Branch. Current audio mixers and amplifiers integrating sound from multiple microphones and audio inputs are currently 12-16 years in age and experiencing significant technical breakdowns. Equipment has been steadily deteriorating over recent years. These hardware failures disrupt court operations, and the audio devices are no longer supported by the software vendor creating the official court record. Parts or used devices to repair broken equipment are no longer available. Replacing devices piecemeal as they fail typically takes 5 - 7 weeks. During that time the courtroom cannot be used for official proceedings. The Judicial Branch plans to upgrade and modernize all courtroom audio systems in three phases.

Request #3: For any completed projects, or projects that will be completed by June 30, 2025, identify any remaining balances

The Courts Digitization project is completed. The balance of \$6,035 will be lapsed. Project numbers 125 and 127 are not yet completed.

From the above information, our intent is to communicate these key points:

- We have accounted for the current balance of capital appropriations from 2019 and 2021.
- Our 2019 and 2021 funding requires a lapse extension due to a reassessment of court priorities as it relates to NH e-Court.
- As it has done since 2012, the NHJB will continue to prudently manage the NH e-Court and Associated Critical Infrastructure project lapse extensions while striving to meet the needs of NH citizens.

I hope this letter provides clear responses to the Committee's requests regarding the Judicial Branch's Capital appropriation balances and its request to extend the lapse of funds currently

appropriated for the NH e-Court and Associated Critical Infrastructure projects. In an effort to be a responsible steward of taxpayer funds, and given the current fiscal climate facing the New Hampshire State Budget, the Judicial Branch will forego any additional requests for Capital Budget funds for the FY26-27 biennium. In the event further discussion is required, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Keating". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Keating".

Honorable Christopher Keating
Interim Director, Administrative Office of the Courts