

# CENTER for JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC. (CJA)

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March 11, 2025

TO: New York Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Zayas

FROM: Elena Sassower, Director  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)

RE: FOIL/Records Request – The Judiciary’s FY2025-26 Budget Submission

The [Judiciary’s FY 2025-26 Budget submission](#) bears your name on its cover and its first page is your two-sentence November 27, 2024 transmitting memorandum. Pursuant to [Public Officers Law Article VI](#) (FOIL) and [Part 124 of the Rules of the Chief Administrative Judge](#) (Public Access to Records), this is to request:

- (1) records reflecting which are “the attached schedules”, referred to by the “Chief Judge’s Certification” as constituting “the itemized estimates of the financial needs of the Judiciary for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2025...approved by the Court of Appeals”.
- (2) records reflecting which are the “attached itemized estimates”, referred to by the “Court of Appeals Approval”.
- (3) records defining the terms “State Operating Cash Estimate” and “All Funds Cash Estimate”, appearing in the first two paragraphs of the “Introduction” – and why the dollar amount of the “All Funds Cash Estimate” and its percentage increase is NOT furnished, as it is for the “State Operating Cash Estimate”, *to wit*, “The FY 2026 State Operating Cash Estimate of \$3 billion reflects an increase of \$268.2 million (9.9%) over FY 2025” (1<sup>st</sup> page of “Introduction”, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence).
- (4) any narrative explanation of the two charts entitled “Judiciary All Funds Disbursement Requirements (In Millions)” and “Judiciary All Funds Appropriation Requirements”, and, specifically, why two charts are needed, the definition of “FY 2025 Available” from which the dollar amounts of the “Change” is calculated, and why neither chart identifies “Reappropriations”.
- (5) records as to why the Judiciary’s 18-page “Judiciary Appropriation Bill” – so-identified by the “Table of Contents” – is only titled “The Judiciary” – and why it begins at §2 and then continues, ten pages later, with §3 for “Reappropriations”.

- (6) records explaining/interpreting the two introductory “Notwithstanding” provisions on page 1 of the Bill – and:
- (i) pertaining to the first, records as to the amount of monies “transferred to the attorney licensing fund” from “the state treasury pursuant to [subdivision 1 of section 465 of the judiciary law](#)” in the FY2024-25 fiscal year based on the identical provision in the [Judiciary’s FY2024-25 Bill](#), and,
  - (ii) pertaining to the second, records as to the number of “contracts with the center for justice innovation”, approved by you and filed with the comptroller and their amounts, pursuant to the corresponding provision in the Judiciary’s FY2024-25 Bill, identical except that its maximum was “\$12.8 million”, not “\$15 million”.
- (7) records germane to the “Notwithstanding” provision on page 1 of the Bill under the heading “State Operations 2025-26”, *to wit*, your approval of increases and decreases by interchange in FY2024-25, pursuant to the identical provision in the Judiciary’s FY2024-25 Bill, and, specifically, how many and what they were.
- (8) records establishing why the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill” (at pp. 1, 10-18) includes “Reappropriations”, when such are NOT mentioned anywhere else in the Judiciary’s budget submission, *to wit*, (i) its eight-page “Introduction”, (ii) its two charts; (iii) its three-part “FY 2026 Judiciary Budget Request” section which includes “Aid to Localities” and “Capital Projects”; and (iv) its “General State Charges” section.
- (9) records showing that the “Reappropriations” (at pp. 1, 10-18) meet the definition of what is suitable for reappropriation, such as the Division of the Budget identifies in its [“Citizen’s Guide”/“Financial Terminology”](#) – apart from the first entry under “Aid to Localities Reappropriations 2025-26” (at p. 15) and the entries under “Capital Project Reappropriations 2025-26” (at pp. 16-18).
- (10) records as to what is the total dollar amount of the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill” – and why that amount is NOT identified on the Bill’s first page – or thereafter.
- (11) records as to what is the total dollar amount of the “Appropriations” sought by the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill” – and why that amount is NOT identified on the Bill’s first page<sup>1</sup> – or thereafter.

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<sup>1</sup> The amount would appear to be the addition the cumulative “Appropriations” figures in the four charts scattered in the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill”: at p.1: \$2,671,796,000, plus at p.7: \$327,590,000, plus at p.8: \$50,000,000, equals \$3,049,386,000, plus, at p.9: \$1,043,785,000 in general state charges, equals a **total of \$4,093,171,000 in “Appropriations”**. This is the “All Funds Total” that appears at the bottom of the second chart, as being the “FY 2026 Requested”.

- (12) records as to what is the total dollar amount of the “Reappropriations” sought by the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill”<sup>2</sup> – and why that amount is NOT identified on the Bill’s first page – or thereafter.
- (13) records as to why the Judiciary’s FY25-26 Budget submission for its “Attorney Discipline Program” – part of “Appellate Auxiliary Operations” ([at pp. 81-82](#)) – seeks \$17,287,000, with an accompanying text stating that this is “an increase of \$0.3 million (1.8%) over the current year adjusted appropriation”, when last year’s request ([at pp. 107-109](#)) sought \$17,773,853 – in other words, this year’s request is \$486,853 LESS than last year’s.
- (14) records as to why, in contrast to the Judiciary’s prior budget submissions which had identified the “Office of the Inspector General” as part of its “Court Support Services Program” of its “Courts of Original Jurisdiction” and specified the appropriation for it,<sup>3</sup> the comparable section of the [FY25-26 Budget submission](#) (at pp. 39-42) omits the [Office of the Inspector General](#) whose jurisdiction includes non-judicial personnel, such as the Appellate Division Attorney Grievance Committees and Appellate Division staff – and a search of the FY25-26 submission brings up ZERO results.
- (15) records reflecting the Judiciary’s intended FY25-26 appropriation for the Office of the Inspector General.
- (16) records reflecting what actions you took in response to [CJA’s October 25, 2023 complaint to you](#) against “Judges, Government-Attorneys, & Government-Retained Attorneys Arising from a Fraudulent, Culturally-Biased Child Abuse/Neglect Petition against Innocent Parents” to ensure its proper handling by the Commission on Judicial Conduct and by those within your supervisory purview, *to wit*, the Appellate Division Attorney Grievance Committees, the Inspector General, and Statewide Coordinating Judge for Family Court Matters Richard Rivera – germane, *inter alia*, to your “Effectively Serving Families” section of your “Introduction” (at p. iv) and what the “Introduction” (at p. iii) identifies as

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<sup>2</sup> The amount would appear to be the addition of the cumulative “Reappropriations” figures in the four charts in the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill”: [at p.1](#): \$91,952,000, plus [at p.7](#): \$161,000,000, plus, [at p.8](#), \$50,600,000, plus [at p.9](#): \$155,000,000, for a **total of \$458,552,000 in “Reappropriations”**.

<sup>3</sup> See: [Judiciary’s FY24-25 budget](#) (p.56): \$1,855,926; [Judiciary’s FY23-24 budget](#) (p.61): \$1,744,565; [Judiciary’s FY22-23 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,430,336; [Judiciary’s FY21-22 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,408,823; [Judiciary’s FY20-21 budget](#) (p.63): \$1,513,120; [Judiciary’s FY19-20 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,466,580; [Judiciary’s FY18-19 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,414,575; [Judiciary’s FY17-18 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,297,162; [Judiciary’s FY16-17 budget](#) (p.60): \$1,411,119; [Judiciary’s FY15-16 budget](#) (p.64): \$1,361,387; [Judiciary’s FY14-15 budget](#) (p.64): \$1,286,199; [Judiciary’s FY13-14 budget](#) (p.64): \$1,266,866; [Judiciary’s FY12-13 budget](#) (p.62): \$1,255,968; [Judiciary’s FY11-12 budget](#) (p.288): \$1,534,331.

“Enhanced funding for Attorney for Child (AFC) providers (\$6.5 million including \$1.2 million enhanced funding and \$4.4 million from UCS IV-E base funds): to support \$113 million for AFC contractual providers, reflecting a 35% increase in funding since FY 2023” (underlining in the original);

and, repetitively, under a heading “Attorney for Child Representation” (at pp. vii) states:

“The FY 2026 Budget Request includes \$113 million to support the Attorney for the Child contractual providers. The request supports a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for all contractual providers as well as other contractual enhancements. Additional enhanced funding will also be distributed to the providers through the UCS IV-E Fund for a total contractual increase of \$9.6 million (9.2%).”

with the whopping appropriation request for the “Attorney for the Child Program” – part of your “Appellate Auxiliary Operations” – identified by your FY25-26 Budget submission (at pp. 72-73) as \$211,188,000.

- (17) records reflecting what actions you and Chief Judge Wilson took with respect to [CJA’s January 18, 2024 Opposition Report to the December 4, 2023 Report on Judicial Compensation of the Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation](#), addressed to you both – germane to your FY25-26 Budget submission, especially with respect to judicial salaries, the Appellate Division Attorney Grievance Committees, the Inspector General, and “Administration and General Support” (pp. 83-84) – the latter seeking \$26,791,000 “or an increase of \$1.9 million (7.6%) over the current year adjusted appropriation”.<sup>4</sup>

Thank you.

s/ Elena Sassower

cc: Office of Court Administration FOIL Officer/Assistant Deputy Counsel Diane Turo  
Senate Finance Committee Chair Krueger & Ranking Member O’Mara  
Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chair Pretlow & Ranking Member Ra  
Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Hoylman-Sigal & Ranking Member Palumbo  
Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair Lavine & Ranking Member Tannousis

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<sup>4</sup> Apparently, “Administration and General Support” is a real growth area, as in your last year’s FY2024-25 Budget submission (at p. 110), your request was \$25,152,226, “an increase of \$3.2 million (14.5%) over the current year adjusted appropriation.”