

The Judicial Council of California is the constitutionally created policymaking body of the California courts. The council meets at least six times a year for business meetings that are open to the public and videocast live via the California Courts website. What follows is a formatted and unedited transcript of the last meeting. The official record of each meeting, the meeting minutes, are usually approved by the council at the next business meeting. Much more information about this meeting, the work of the Judicial Council, and the role of the state court system is available on the California Courts website at *courts.ca.gov*.

>> Thank you. Good morning and welcome to the public business meeting of the Judicial Council of California for Friday, October 24, 2025. The meeting is now in session. During our technical check for the live webcast, we confirm the attendance of a quorum. Based on our objective, we plan to adjourn at about 11:25. Before we get underway, I would like to welcome our new members to their first meeting and thank our reappointed Judicial Council members who are serving new terms. I would like to welcome and thank the following: Judge Jeffrey Kauffman, Judge Patricia Kelly, Judge Michael Rhoads, Mr. David Slayton, and Ms. Dena Stone. And thank you to our reappointed members: Ms. Joan Irion and Judge Maria Lucy Armendariz. We do the virtual applause to all of you and welcome you and thank you so much. We are very fortunate to have knowledgeable and talented judges, court administrators and legal practitioners to draw upon to serve on the governing body of our judicial branch and to help advance our key goals and objectives. It's this mix of experience and institutional knowledge combined with new ideas and fresh perspectives that enables the council to enhance judicial administration statewide to support the rule of law and deliver equal access to justice for all Californians. Thank you again for your volunteering to serve. And now for public comment I will turn it over to the executive and planning chair, Justice Brad Hill.

>> Thank you very much, Chief. We will now begin the public comment period during which members of the public may speak on matters of judicial administration or specific agenda items. Written public comments offered for each meeting and comments received were provided to the members of the council. Commenters may address the council in person or remotely. Today's meeting including public comment is live streamed and the recording will be available publicly online. Although our meeting is being held remotely, members of the public were given the opportunity to speak remotely or in person at the Judicial Council office in San Francisco. Be reminded the Judicial Council is not an adjudicatory body. The council is not authorized to intervene on behalf of a party in a case. Rather, concerns as to substantive rulings in a case may be addressed through the appropriate procedural mechanisms. We request you refrain from speaking about specific cases and individuals involved including court personnel and parties. We have three, actually four speakers with us remotely, none in person today and turn first to Mr. Kai On. If you wouldn't mind at this point when your name is called, please turn on your camera, unmute your microphone and begin by stating your name and if applicable your title and affiliation. As you know, a timer is displayed on the screen to help keep track of the allotted time and you will have a warning when you have ten seconds remaining. Please proceed.

>> Can you hear me?

>> We can. Please proceed. Thank you.

>> Okay. Good morning, all councilmember. My name is Kai On from Sacramento. Both Commission on Judicial Performance and State Bar closed my complaint against attorney general and Sacramento district attorney. Both DA case 99FO8735 is the primary evidence to confirm my father Woon Kwong On was the victim and Jone Soo Fong was the defendant whose sentence for hit and run that killed my father in the case. The Sacramento DA office and police department provide me that information. If Commission on Judicial Performance and State Bar have reviewed the DA case 99F08735 and find information but they did not take action against attorney general Robert Bonta, Sacramento DA Thien Ho, and Sacramento presiding judge. That is obstruction of justice. If the two agents did not review the DA case filed but closed my complaint, those agencies failed to perform their professional responsibility. I also request the opinion from Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinion about my case. But there was no response. Judicial Council includes representative from Supreme Court, appeal court, trial court, state and State Bar, but the council remains silenced. Honor Guerrero, the justice system under your supervision has integrity issue. In May 2025, Judicial Council meeting I request your investigation if political power is controlling the justice system. Honor Guerrero, could you provide your opinion on my complaint.

>> Mr. On, we appreciate your statement but this isn't an opportunity for a give and take. You can present your statement and you have about 45 seconds left.

>> I have nothing to talk about but when State Bar closed my complaint the letter from State Bar even have no name, no title, and no signature. I'm not able to confirm if the person who is authorized to close my complaint. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much, Mr. On. As always, we appreciate your time and your comments here today. Thank you.

>> We're going to turn to our next speaker Kristal Keith and would ask that you turn on your camera, unmute your microphone and begin by stating your name and if applicable title and affiliation. Mr. On, you can turn off your camera so we can turn to our second speaker. Thank you so much.

>> Good morning, Madam Chief Justice and members of the Judicial Council. My name is Kristal Keith. I am the founder of Provisional Parenting. I have been a trained professional supervised visitation monitor since 2008. For over 16 years I have dedicated my career to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families involved in the family law system. Despite my extensive experience, standard 5.20 training through the California Association of Supervised Visitation Service Providers as well as my initial training through Heal Play Love University and continued education through the supervised visitation network I have encountered a significant barrier. I am unable to take the Judicial Council's standard 5.20

training because it is no longer offered. Without this specific training I am restricted from providing services in certain California counties that require it. Even though I meet or exceed every other qualification and have consistently pursued advanced professional education along with being court approved in San Luis Obispo County, Santa Barbara County and Monterey County. This creates a troubling gap. Families in need of supervised visitation are left with fewer providers, increasing wait times and limiting access to safe visitation options. Experienced monitors like myself committed to upholding the highest standards are prevented from serving due to a lack of access to the Judicial Council's training as well as Access to Grant Visitation program. In addition, I believe I am qualified to eventually provide this training to others. If given the opportunity to complete the Judicial Council standard 5.20 training myself, I would greatly appreciate the chance to later collaborate and serve as a trainer representing the Judicial Council. Helping expand access for other professionals and supporting the Judicial Council's goals of consistency and public safety statewide as this is a pressing need. I respectfully urge the Judicial Council to consider reinstating the standard 5.20 training or to provide an alternative pathway for experienced monitors to demonstrate compliance that would be acceptable to the county family law judges. Access to this training is not just about professional development. It is about ensuring children and families across California have public and equal access to qualified, trained monitors who can provide safe and appropriate visitation services as standard 5.20 requires. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the safety of California's families. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much. We appreciate your comments. We'll turn to our next and final speaker CJ Daniel.

>> Hello.

>> Yes. I don't see you yet, but I hear you. There we go.

>> Hi. Good morning. Okay.

>> You're set.

>> Good. So good morning. I wanted to briefly come on and request that the council expeditiously develops legislation, not legislation, but policies around recently passed Senate Bill 59, the Transgender Privacy Act. Senator Wiener pushed legislation through, it passed. Governor Newsom signed the bill into law on October 13. I understand the council has a process of reviewing different laws that have been passed and developing forms and procedures for the implementation of this, but basically, quickly it provides safeguard for privacy and safety of transgender and gender diverse Californians and provides a legal mechanism to restrict the public dissemination of sensitive personal information, including names, addresses, gender history, that could expose individuals to discrimination, harassment and violence. So specifically, why I'm asking for you all to quickly add this to your upcoming agenda is we're seeing an increase in data aggregators and website scrapers that would publish all of this

information publicly. Individuals who may have had a dead name someone goes and searches, it links them to that name change case and these data aggregators have put rules in place that don't allow for individuals to request that they remove that information. They give them a six-month window and they are basically waiting to see how the council implements this specific privacy act so individuals can go and file at their local jurisdictions to be able to have their information and record sealed. So, again, we're respectfully asking you all prioritize the developing the framework and forms and rule making processes for this Senate Bill 59 at your next meeting agenda upcoming so we can ensure these protections are in force for this very vulnerable community that is being exposed to digital and real world harm. Thank you all so much.

>> Thank you very much. We appreciate your thoughts. Thanks to all of the members of the public who are with us today and as a reminder you can continue viewing the meeting on the California Courts website and Chief, that concludes the public comment for today.

>> Thank you very much, Justice Hill and thank you to each of the speakers who provided comments. The council appreciates all the comments provided. In instances where we do not respond or I personally don't respond, it's not that we don't take what is provided to us seriously. But it's perhaps based on the information that is provided or the nature of the relief that's requested. So, again, we welcome public comment, we appreciate the three speakers here today as well as the individuals who submitted written comments to us in advance. Next on our agenda is my regular report as Chief Justice summarizing some of my engagements and ongoing outreach activities on behalf of the judicial branch since our business meeting on July 18. September was a meaningful month as we celebrated Constitution Month by recognizing the recipients of my annual Civic Learning Awards. These are students and schools who exemplify outstanding leadership and civic engagement. I had the honor of personally presenting the Civic Learning Award of Excellence to three outstanding schools. I was joined by judges, justices, legislators and other civic leaders to recognize the achievements of these inspiring students and educators. I'm proud to cosponsor these awards with State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond. My first visit was to Norte Vista High School in in Riverside County. Along with judges from the Riverside court and Administrative Presiding Justice Judith McConnell, we were treated to a show and tell of community service projects that were led by the students. At Ida Jew Academy and Valle Vista Elementary in Santa Clara County, I was joined by Judge Julia Alloggiamento, vice lead of my Power of Democracy initiative. Justice Cynthia Lie, Judge Sunil Kulkarni, and representatives from the legislative branch also supported the celebration. At Sparks Middle School in Los Angeles County, the event was attended by Presiding Judge Sergio Tapia and Assistant Presiding Judge Ricardo Ocampo and court outreach staff from the Los Angeles court. Representatives from both the legislative and executive branches also lent their support and joined about 75 students from the school's leadership programs. These visits give me the opportunity to speak directly to student leaders and in some cases administer their oath of office. Their enthusiasm for civic responsibility is truly inspiring. It's clear that our continued investment in civic learning is helping to shape the next generation as engaged and informed Californians. In support of Constitution Month I participated in the James Otis lecture. This is an event sponsored by the

American Board of Trial Advocates and La Verne College of Law. The lecture focused on a topic that is fundamental to our justice system: the independence of the judiciary. Early this month, civic education came to the California Supreme Court as we hosted nearly 100 students, local superior court judges and appellate court justices for our annual oral argument special session. This year's session was especially noteworthy as it marked the first time in nearly 50 years that the court convened in Monterey County. We held the session in Colton Hall where as you know California's first constitution was drafted in 1849. The historic setting added a unique atmosphere. There was no internet, only battery operated candles to light the room. So this was a tangible sense of our state's history and in this particular case constitutional root. This was the third annual outreach session during my tenure and I look forward to continuing the tradition. Next year the court will travel to Shasta County. September also marked the start of Hispanic Heritage Month which runs from September 15 to October 15. I had the honor of delivering the keynote address at California Western School of Law in San Diego where I was joined by San Diego judge Marcella McLaughlin. During the event I spoke about the importance of the rule of law and importance of remaining vigilant and protecting it for future generations. And I engaged in a Q&A session with the audience of students, judges, and other members of the legal community and I thank, if I see somewhere on screen, Judge Hallahan for your support and attendance as well. I gave the keynote address for the California Latino Bench-Bar Leadership Summit at UCLA by the Mexican American Bar Association about the importance of continuing to diversify our bench and to attract and retain the most qualified candidates. Back in San Francisco I had the pleasure of welcoming a group of judges and commissioners to my chambers as part of our New Judge Orientation program which this time included ten judges and two commissioners. Continuing our support of new members of the bench I also had the honor of addressing our newest judicial officers for a second convening this year of the B. E. Witkin College. This program, which I believe to be one of the most comprehensive judicial education efforts in the country, plays a critical role in helping our new judges transition successfully into their new role in no small part due to our dedicated faculty, which includes, I see you on the screen, Justice Corrigan. Thank you for your commitment to education. I also had the honor of giving the welcoming remarks at the National Civil Justice Institute's Forum for State Appellate Judges. This forum focused on the vital role of state courts in our justice system nationwide. While federal courts often get much of the attention, it's important to remember that the vast majority of cases, over 95%, are handled by our state courts. That's a powerful reminder of the impact our courts have on people's daily lives. Last month I also joined two of our justice system partners, the California Judges Association and the California Lawyers Association, for their annual meetings in Los Angeles. In addition to administering the oaths of office for their new boards and officers I also took part in a number of events, joining Q&A sessions, attending award ceremonies, and delivering various opening remarks. I attended the California Judges Association membership and awards luncheon where I participated in the long-standing tradition of the conversation with the Chief. This year's session was moderated by CJA's outgoing president Judge Khymberli Apaloo and we had a discussion about a wide range of topics from the continued promise of remote technology in our courts to the importance of civic education safeguarding judicial independence and maintaining public trust in the judiciary. I also had the chance to take part in two inspiring events focused on expanding access to

justice. First I joined an armchair chat at the signature event for the Legal Services Funders Network which helps support legal aid efforts across a range of critical areas like foster care and domestic violence. They do great work. Earlier this morning I also joined Presiding Judge Patricia Kelly, our Administrative Director Shelley Curran and senior leadership from the Santa Barbara court in hosting Senate President Pro tem-Elect Monique Limón at the Figueroa courthouse. We had a conversation about judicial branch priorities including the need for stable and predictable funding for the courts. Many courts are hosting tours for lawmakers and working to strengthen relationships with the legislative branch. These visits are invaluable in helping them better understand the work our courts do every day. Finally to mark the 15th anniversary of the Tribal Court–State Court Forum I spoke at a convening in Sacramento that brought together members of the forum and our Judicial Council's trial and state programs unit. The focus was on improving how we recognize and enforce tribal court orders within our state system. This is a key part of the forum's broader mission to strengthen collaboration between state and tribal courts and make sure justice is delivered fairly and effectively whenever jurisdiction overlap. That concludes my report and now we'll hear from Administrative Director Shelley Curran with her report to you.

>> Thank you, Chief Justice. Good morning, Chief and members of the council. I would like to start by calling your attention to the regular Administrative Director's written report. This represents a roundup of the programmatic and service activities undertaken by our staff since the July business meeting. This is separate from the matters that are included on today's agenda. The report itself recaps actions taken by 21 council advisory bodies addressing a broad range of judicial administration issues. It includes the Advisory Committee on Audits and Financial Accountability's review of public comments and review of the branch contracting manual and adds provisions to generative AI to make certain that we are aligned with the state contracting and administrative manuals. Another example of our committee work is the work that the Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee is doing right now. It focuses on winter cycle rules proposals to implement changes in law on enforcement of judgments and also name and gender change proceedings. And as our Judicial Council members began their term of service so did the newly appointed members to council advisory committees. The Chief Justice made appointments to 24 standing council advisory bodies and ten education curriculum committees. Approximately 335 nominations were received for 210 vacancies during the 2025 general nominations cycle. Turning to a roundup of education programs over the last three months, more than 55 education and training programs and resources were created, updated or delivered for judicial officers, court personnel and justice system partners. These included programs ranging from handling human trafficking cases and implementing firearms policies to branchwide cybersecurity summit as well as the summit on virtual data that included approximately 280 participants focusing on data quality, building analytic teams and data dashboards. Our education team and judicial faculty have also been kept very busy facilitating programs for our new judges. Since July, Governor Newsom has made 48 new appointments, 12 just this week. That is a total of 110 appointments to date in 2025. The Chief mentioned visiting with new judicial officers during New Judge Orientation programs and judicial college along with several rotating councilmembers. I'm always happy to have the regular opportunity

to speak about the role and responsibility of the Judicial Council at the judge orientation programs. As part of my goal to meet and connect with court leaders locally I'm happy to have had the chance to visit a number of courts recently and joined the Chief on her visit to the Superior Court of Santa Barbara County and spent time with court leadership teams in San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles courts. I really appreciate the time and value the direct opportunities and insights that these visits provide me as well as for our staff for those who are working directly with the courts on a day-to-day basis. It's important to have an opportunity to get out there, so I appreciate the time that judicial officers and court executive officers take when meeting with us. In her report the Chief mentioned our visit with Senator Pro tem-Elect Monique Limón and the importance of meeting with legislators across the state. Now is a very good time to do that as they are on recess until January and I'm pleased to report many courts are using this opportunity to invite legislators for a day on the bench visit. They're working closely in coordination with our Governmental Affairs office to create an information resource packet. This was shared with all presenting judges and court executive officers to encourage and support as many legislative visits as possible. Over the last couple months, I'm aware of at least 13 legislators visiting 11 different courthouses and there are more planned. As the Chief mentioned and I will reiterate that this really is invaluable in helping our legislators better understand the daily work of the courts, and we certainly appreciate all the time and effort courts are investing in this important endeavor. I also want to mention a couple of other items that are included in the written report. Over the last three months court interpreter certification exams were administered for approximately 336 candidates in ten different languages. Spanish accounted for the most candidates, 222, followed by Mandarin with 50 candidates. I'm also glad to report the very high interest in the council's recent recruitment outreach conducted by our Language Access Services team to promote careers in court interpreting. More than 1200 people tuned in for a live streamed court interpreting court webinar. The session hosted by credentialed interpreters and council staff and covered issues like skills, examination tips and the benefits of working as a credentialed interpreter in California's courts. During August and September we had 600 judicial officers from 16 different courts participate in our judicial workload time study. This informs our 2026 judicial needs assessment. We really appreciate the cooperation of presiding judges, court executive officers and all the judges who wrote in on this effort. The data validation process is under way and expect recommendation to the council to be presented in the spring or summer of 2026. Finally, I want to publicly express my appreciation to two of our senior staff leaders leaving the council and welcome a new member director to our organization. Laura Speed is leaving us after 12 years in public service as the director of our Leadership Support Services. Prior to being director of Leadership Support Services, Laura served as the assistant director in our Governmental Affairs office. Laura is leaving to take the position of the executive director at the State Bar. We're grateful to Laura for her years of contributions to the council. We wish her very well in her upcoming leadership role and appreciate the opportunity that we're going to have to continue to work closely with Laura. We're also bidding farewell to Don Will who has worked for the council for 25 years. He is retiring as our deputy director for our Center for Families, Children and the Courts and we're grateful to Don for his many contributions to the work of the council and leadership in CFCC, in particular on juvenile dependency and foster care matters. With Don's retirement we're

fortunate to have him joined in September by Sarah Davis as the director of the Center for Families, Children and the Courts. Sarah comes to us from the Superior Court of Sacramento County where she served as director of operations in the juvenile division. Her career with the trial court spans over 20 years. You all received the announcement about Sarah's appointment sharing her sense of leadership credentials and experience in family and juvenile court matters and we're very happy and grateful to have her join our senior management team. That concludes my report.

>> Thank you very much, Shelley, for your report. And we thank Don and Laura and wish them well and also welcome Sarah. In addition I wanted to thank Judge Borjón and Judge Walton. I neglected to mention them during the CJA Q&A. I thank them for doing that with me as well. Next we have our consent agenda. We have about 42 different items. The council's Executive and Planning Committee sets items. Before I do that, let me go back to Judge Wood who I believe has her hand up.

>> I apologize, Chief Justice. I wanted to make a comment about the consent agenda so I apologize for interrupting your introduction.

>> Okay. Well, thank you and we'll turn to you for a comment. After that I just wanted to explain for the public the manner in which we set cases or items for the consent agenda. It's basically the Executive and Planning Committee who sets those items and discussion agenda items to optimize the best use of our time. The council's Rules Committee provides guidance and any member of the council can always ask for an item to be moved from the consent to the discussion agenda. I will turn it to Judge Wood if you had a comment on any of the consent agenda items.

>> Thank you, Chief Justice Guerrero and members of the council. I have the honor of serving as the vice chair of the Rules Committee. However, I am a new member of that committee and as such I did not contribute personally to the volume of the committee's work that is before the council today. I did in preparation for my role as vice chair have the opportunity to attend the meetings where the incredible work was finally reviewed before bringing it to the council today. It was through these observations that I felt compelled to take a few minutes this morning to comment on the Rules Committee and advisory committee's work. As you can see from our meeting materials, the Rules Committee had a busy cycle. More than 2,000 pages of today's meeting materials were considered and are recommended by the Rules Committee. In fact, 35 of the 42 items on our consent agenda today are rules and forms proposals. 31 of those proposals circulated for public comment. The proposals reflect the work of 10 separate advisory committees. The proposals received approximately 300 comments from internal and external stakeholders. All comments are carefully considered by the advisory committees as they refine the proposals to prepare the materials before the council today. Together the proposals before us include 237 new and revised forms, 44 new and revised rules, 1 new standard of judicial administration and 83 new and revised criminal jury instructions. To give you a sense of the breadth of these proposals I want to highlight two or three of them this morning. This is not to

diminish the importance of the other proposals, which all advance our Judicial Council goals and improve access to justice on a daily basis. First, the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness on item 25-153 of our agenda recommends adoption of one new rule and approval of one new optional court form to implement legislation, Senate Bill 949 that requires superior courts to allow anyone participating in court proceedings a reasonable amount of break time to express breast milk for an infant child. The committee recommends a confidential process for superior court users to request break time for these purposes and the new rule and form create a uniform process for witnesses, litigants and attorneys among others to make a confidential request for a reasonable break from court proceedings. The rule and form will improve access to justice and make it easier for courts to schedule these proceedings. Second, the Appellate Advisory Committee at item 25-132 recommends updates to the appellate division oral argument video conferencing rules. New provisions authorize remote appearances by parties and remote participation by judges in appellate division oral arguments. The changes enable remote participation by parties and judges while allowing individual courts the leeway to adopt local rules that suit their needs and capabilities. As a trial judge from a smaller court in a geographically large county I wanted to note that remote participation will allow judges and litigants to avoid traveling long distances. This will be helpful in superior courts with multiple and geographically distant court facilities and locations. Finally several of the proposals on the agenda involve protective order forms to implement new legislation. For example, one proposal addresses firearm relinquishment across order types, civil harassment, elder or dependent adult abuse, gun violence, post-secondary school violence and workplace violence. Among other things, the proposed forms contain a new item for the trial court to find a restrained person has firearms, firearm parts or ammunition and to list out these items specifically. For each item listed the proposed forms allow the court to record whether the restrained person submitted proof that they complied with a relinquishment order by surrendering the items to law enforcement or selling them to a licensed gun dealer. Additionally if the court finds a restrained person has not complied with the relinquishment order the proposed forms facilitate notification to law enforcement and the prosecution. The legislature continues to be active on protective order issues and the committees work diligently to implement this new legislation. Finally I want to acknowledge the hard work of the advisory committees and their volunteer members as well as the staff to the committees. I would also be remiss if I did not also mention the stewardship of the Rules Committee's former chair Justice Fujisaki who worked closely with staff to improve these materials. The current chair Justice Irion and I are both grateful to everyone involved in this thorough process. With those comments I recommend approval of the 35 rules and forms proposals on the content agenda today and would move to approve the full consent agenda. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Judge Wood. Thank you for highlighting all of the work that goes on behind the scenes. We see when we receive the materials that there's a lot to digest and it's only manageable because of all the work that goes into it and I thank you for highlighting those few examples as well. We thank you for moving approval of the second agenda. Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill. And we have a first by Judge Wood, second by Justice Hill. All those in favor say aye.

>> Aye.

>> Aye, aye, aye.

>> Any no's? I am abstaining on item number 25-144. Are there any other abstentions?

>> I'm abstaining as well because related matters are currently before us.

>> Thank you. And so those are approved unanimously and the two abstentions will be noted. Okay. And now we have one discussion agenda item today. We'll hear a presentation about our resolution to proclaim November as Court Adoption and Permanency Month. We welcome our presenters Justice Tari Cody, co-chair of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee and also welcome to our adoptive family. So nice to see you. We have Claudia, Michael and Cece, age 2. We'll turn it over to you.

>> Thank you, Chief Justice Guerrero, for that kind introduction and thank you to the council for inviting me today to present on Court Adoption and Permanency Month. As Chief Justice introduced me I'm Tari Cody on the Second District Court of Appeal, Division Six but in my prior life I sat in a dependency assignment in Ventura County. We have one courtroom for dependency in Ventura and I handled all of the dependency cases for approximately 14 years. Total of 14-year period as well as all of the adoptions that occurred in our county. I was also the presiding juvenile judge for a period of that time. Juvenile courts judges are uniquely responsible for the care, supervision, custody and support of children that come before them and they provide active leadership within the community to ensure that resources are available to serve families and children. As you can tell from the title of this presentation, Court Adoption and Permanency Month, where our focus is not just on adoption but also permanency because permanency comes in many forms. It can actually be reunification with parents, placement with a relative. It can take the form of guardianship and also can be an adoption. This is the 26th anniversary of Court Adoption and Permanency Month recognized by the Judicial Council and this year the council is highlighting the importance of kinship care and developing kin-first culture. That term is used to describe a system that prioritizes placing children within their extended family. And I'll digress a little bit here and give you a story. My own experience when I began in dependency many, many years ago, the children that were removed had to be removed from parents for their safety were often placed first in a group home no matter what their age was. I think we did that because it was the most risk-free placement. There was a bed available, there were trained staff, they were able to be medically assessed. But I think we also quickly discovered that that was not the best decision to make about children who were going through the trauma of removal from their parents. We began placing them in foster homes and foster homes are, obviously, at that time preapproved homes that were ready, willing and able to

take in children that needed care. But that often involved placing with strangers. And, again, it was not focused on reducing the harm and trauma that children endure when they are removed from their parents and since then, and today, we've realized we really need to focus on how to reduce that trauma. And we also have realized based on the data and research that we can do that by placing children with family. Not only is that often placement with somebody these children know, but it also allows these children to stay connected with their extended family, cousins, aunts, uncles, and that reduces the trauma of removing children from their parents as much as we can. And as I said research demonstrates that children in kinship care experience fewer behavioral problems, less placement disruptions and require fewer mental health services than youth that are placed in nonrelative care. If the child is placed first a relative or extended family they are three times as likely to remain in that placement after 12 months. 70% of youth placed with relatives are also with their entire sibling set so they get to be placed with their brothers and sisters and they're three times as likely to remain in that placement or I'm sorry 44% placed with nonrelatives don't get to be placed with their siblings and that reminds me of a story about a family that I presided over where there were five children, pretty young, they were in three different homes. Two children in one home, two in another home and a baby in a third home. And we worked really hard to get all those children together. We were able to get four of the older siblings together. But what I remember about this family and about these children is the four older children were extremely strong advocates for getting their baby brother with them. It was important to this sibling group for them all to be together. And we were able to place them with an aunt all together. Youth who are with a relative at the time, they exit foster care, also benefit from a relative placement because they are less likely to reenter care after 12 months. The judicial branch is taking a decisive action to implement a program focused on building a kin-first culture. Effective January 1, 2026, because of the vote you just made on the consent agenda, the Judicial Council will amend rules and revise forms to align judicial procedures with this vital legislative and executive branch priority. The branch is committed to providing ongoing training on kin-first culture in addition to partnering with the California Department of Social Services and the Center for Excellence to conduct local kin-first culture trainings throughout the state and this will be a major theme at the judicial branch's 2025 Beyond the Bench conference which is going to be held in mid-November for the first time since Covid. We're looking forward to that. Now for the best part of today's presentation I'm joined by Claudia, Michael and Cece from Marin County. They're going to share their own story and journeys through foster care and growing up in that system and what led them to adopt Michael's niece Cece. Claudia and Michael have displayed resilience. Their stories are wonderful, and I'm sure you will agree. They have compassion and their family exemplifies the importance of kin care and keeping children in their families and communities. So Michael and Claudia, it's all yours.

>> Hello. My name is Claudia. This is Mike and Cece. We are here to tell our story. When people hear the word adoption, they often think of joy, new beginnings and family portraits. And while all of that can be true, what is often missing in the conversation is the journey that comes before. Especially when adoption happens after foster care. I know that journey personally. I myself entered foster care because of domestic violence. In a matter of seconds my

family was torn apart. My father attempted to take my mother's life. He shot her 15 times in front of my little brother and I and then took his own. In that instant everything I knew was gone. I was only 12, just a child. But I understood one thing very clearly. Life can change in a heartbeat and family is everything. From that point on I lived with uncertainty. I moved from place to place, packing my belongings into boxes. Even as an adult I was scared to fully ever unpack my belongings because what if. Permanency wasn't just a word in a case file to me. It was hope I carried quietly even when I didn't dare believe it could happen. When I was 13 I returned to my mother's care who is now a quadriplegic. At first we had family living close by to help us. But by the time I was 14, all of that support had slowly drifted away. My mother relied heavily on my brothers and I. At an age when most kids are worrying about school and friends, I was stepping into a role beyond my years. It taught me responsibility but also taught me just how much the presence or absence of family can really shape your life. Mike was also in foster care. We both grew up knowing what it felt like to grow up not having a forever family and years later found ourselves on the other side of the system not as kids in care but as foster parents. Our story took an unexpected turn the day our niece was born. From her first day in this world she needed a safe place and came straight into our arms. We've been there for her since day one through every late night feeding, first step, milestone. When the time came we adopted her. That moment standing in court hearing the judge declare us her forever parents wasn't just about her finding permanency. It was about breaking a cycle. It was about two former foster kids creating the stability we once dreamed of and doing it for a child who is not only our daughter but part of our family by blood. Adoption after foster care is not always easy. The children come with histories and sometimes those histories are heavy, but permanency means no matter how heavy the past is, the child never has to carry it alone again. It means birthdays in the same house, holidays with the same family and a safe place to land when life gets hard. Family is so important because it gives you a place to land when the world feels unsteady. It's the people who will show up for you at your worst and celebrate with you at your best. It's the faces you can count on seeing at the dinner table, the voices that cheer you on, arms that wrap around you when you fail and the ones who lift you up when you succeed. Family isn't just who you're related to. It's the people who refuse to give up on you no matter what. For children in foster care, finding that kind of family can change everything. I know there is still stigma surrounding foster care and adoption. Some people think children and foster care are troubled or damaged, some assume adoption is only a last resort. But the truth is children in foster care are just children. Children who have experienced things no child should but who still deserve love, stability and a chance to thrive. Adoption isn't about rescuing a child. It's about saying you belong and I'm not going anywhere. Our daughter will grow up knowing where she belongs. She will never have to question if she's wanted, if she's loved or has a home. And that's what permanency is really about. Giving children what every single one of us deserve. A family that's not temporary. For those of you who work in foster care, adopt, or support these families, what you do changes the entire course of a child's life. You are helping rewrite their story. I can't change the fact that my partner and I grew without permanency but I can tell you giving it to our daughter from the day she was born has been the most important thing we have done.

>> Good morning. My name is Mike Little. When I was 2 my mom left my dad for a man that severely abused our family. When I was 6 my mom broke free and we moved back to the Bay Area. My mom and sister entered a domestic violence shelter and my brother and I stayed with our dad. My dad loved us but couldn't care for us. My aunt stepped in. That year, I sat in a courtroom for the first time. I still see it clearly. After deciding I would live with my aunt the judge smiled and said Molly I hereby order you to take Michael and get an ice cream cone following this proceeding. The room chuckled and I followed that order. I half jokingly suggest every judge do the same for each child. Life with Aunt Molly and Uncle Eric was a gift. I was an all-star baseball player. Aunt Molly coached my soccer team. I joined the band and learned trombone and even played in the jazz band. More important, they taught me how to love, how to trust, and how to be trusted. They showed me no one is perfect. But with love as our guide we can grow into caring successful people. Living with them kept me connected to cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, all bonds I still treasure. Those years gave me a moral compass that has guided me every step since. At 12 I chose to reunify with my mother so I could be with my brother and sister and within a year we were homeless living out of the back of a car. I called Marin County child and family services myself and the three of us entered foster care. We never stayed long in any one place. My brother and I briefly lived together but he soon got into trouble and was sent to a group home. From that moment on he spent much of his youth in and out of juvenile hall and after turning 18, in and out of jail. Many nights I laid awake wondering what was wrong with me, why couldn't I stay with my family. That confusion hardened into mistrust and rebellion. Despite my efforts I didn't find permanent placement and emancipated without permanency. The lack of permanency leaves a mark. I can still feel what it was like to pack up my life into a trash bag and walking into a stranger's house and calling it home never knowing if it would last. That instability follows you and too many children today are carrying that same burden. People ask why I turned out differently than my siblings who faced addiction and repeated arrest. The answer is simple. Kinship care. Those early years with Aunt Molly and Uncle Eric filled with stability, love and the example of trust gave me a foundation my brother and sister didn't have. Permanency in those formative years changed my trajectory. After emancipation I was lost. What pulled me forward was the memory of my Uncle Eric's steady work. I learned carpentry and saved enough money to attend Northwest Lineman College. After 96 unsuccessful job applications I was hired at PG&E where I've now worked for 14 years. The stability I built came from the lessons I learned in their home. Years later, my brother who struggled with addiction and serious mental illness had a child. From the moment I knew she was coming I promised myself she would never live with uncertainty I experienced as a teen. Claudia and I began the foster parent licensing process before Cece was born. It wasn't easy and every detail of our lives was examined to make sure Cece would be safe and loved. The day after birth and being placed in the NICU she was placed with us as an emergency placement and we brought her home from the hospital. Reunification wasn't possible and with Marin County child and family services we pressed on to finalize her adoption. Today Cece is a thriving 2-year-old. She sings, chases chickens in our backyard and is surrounded every day by her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who adore her. Keeping Cece in our family and sharing the guiding compass Aunt Molly and Uncle Eric gave me is what I believe will give her a life worth living. From birth she has known love, stability and her family's culture, priceless

continuity that every child deserves. I've seen encouraging changes in the child welfare system. There's more support for kinship care and support for relatives willing to step forward. Those changes helped Cece achieve permanency quickly. Kinship care interrupts cycles of trauma. It keeps families together when parents can't provide care. It gives children the chance to grow up with people who know their history and love them unconditionally. That first court order for an ice cream cone makes me smile but the deeper order that day was far more important. I was given a chance to grow up in a safe, loving home. Cece's laughter today proves what's possible when courts, social workers, and families work together. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Michael and Claudia. You remind me of how much I miss working in the dependency system when we have those happy endings. I would like to again thank the judicial branch, Chief Justice Guerrero, and the council for their commitment to permanency. I request the Judicial Council proclaim November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month and you have the resolution in front of you.

>> Thank you so much, Justice Cody, for your long-standing commitment to this area and important work that the courts do. And to our adoptive family, thank you, Claudia and Mike, for sharing your journey and own personal experience with foster care and we're so happy to hear about the kinship care you're providing to Cece, the permanent home and the love that you're giving to her. And she's so well behaved so thanks for bearing with us as well. Are there any questions for our presenters or any comments? Okay. Hard for me to see hands but I don't think there are. If there are, speak up. Oh, I see. Thank you, Ms. Hill.

>> Yes. I would just like to say thank you so much for that extremely moving presentation. I never had the privilege of working in the dependency system, but I did work in the delinquency juvenile justice system and I saw the aftermath and the problems that ensued after siblings were separated and, in fact, remember very distinctly a story about a boy that kept running away and ultimately because he was placed far away from his brother stole a car in order to get close to his brother, and my understanding is that years later both of them ended up in the criminal justice system. The importance of forever homes and particularly being with siblings and kinship care, I am just so gratified to see that coming into focus as being a major priority. And you are just a beautiful example of what that means and your story was just incredibly moving and highlights the importance. So thank you so very much for that lovely presentation and congratulations to you.

>> Thank you so much, Ms. Hill. I don't see any other hands.

>> I would move adoption.

>> Thank you.

>> If there's a motion to move approval and I heard Justice Corrigan I believe.

>> Yes.

>> Thank you. As a second. Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye.

>> Aye.

>> Any no's or abstentions? Thank you. This item is approved. Thank you so much. Now have some ice cream.

>> Thank you.

>> Okay. As a final item for this Judicial Council meeting, the chairs of the council of various committees, various internal committees, have prepared written reports. The Executive and Planning Committee, the Rules Committee, Legislation, Budget, and Technology. And those are all posted to our California Courts public website. That does conclude our October Judicial Council business meeting. Our next regularly scheduled business meeting will be on December 11 and 12. Thank you, everybody. The meeting is now adjourned.