

CENTER *for* JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC. (CJA)

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January 26, 2026

TO: Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Zayas

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

RE: FOIL/Records Request – The Judiciary’s FY2026-27 Budget Submission

The [Judiciary’s FY 2026-27 budget submission](#) bears your name on its cover and its first page is your two-sentence December 1, 2025 transmitting memorandum. Pursuant to [Public Officers Law Article VI](#) (“Freedom of Information Law”) and [Part 124 of the Rules of the Chief Administrative Judge](#) (“Public Access to Records”), this is to request:¹

- (1) records reflecting which are “the attached schedules”, referred to by the November 20, 2025 “Chief Judge’s Certification” as constituting “the itemized estimates of the financial needs of the Judiciary for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2026...approved by the Court of Appeals”.
- (2) records reflecting which are the “attached itemized estimates”, referred to by the November 20, 2025 “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 2027 State Operating Cash Estimate of \$3.2 billion reflects an increase of \$199 million (6.7%) over FY 2026” (1st page of “Introduction”, 1st paragraph, 2nd 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 2026 Available” from which the dollar amounts of the “Change” is calculated, and why neither chart identifies “Reappropriations”.

¹ Most of the records here requested parallel those requested by [CJA’s March 11, 2025 FOIL/records request to you](#) entitled “The Judiciary’s FY2025-26 Budget Submission” – [the subject of my today’s FOIL/records request to you pertaining thereto](#).

- (5) records as to why the Judiciary's 17-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 "Judiciary Appropriation 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 FY2025-26 fiscal year based on the identical provision in the [Judiciary's FY2025-26 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 identical corresponding provision in the Judiciary's FY2025-26 Bill.
- (7) records germane to the "Notwithstanding" provision on page 1 of the Bill under the heading "State Operations 2026-27", *to wit*, your approval of increases and decreases by interchange in FY2025-26, pursuant to the identical provision in the Judiciary's FY2025-26 Bill, and, specifically, how many and what they were.
- (8) records establishing why the "Judiciary Appropriation Bill" (at pp. 1, 10-17) includes "Reappropriations", when such are NOT mentioned anywhere else in the Judiciary's budget submission, *to wit*, (i) its five-page "Introduction", (ii) its two charts; (iii) its three-part "FY 2027 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, 10-17) 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 2026-27" (at p. 14) and the entries under "Capital Project Reappropriations 2026-27" (at pp. 15-16).
- (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" requested by the "Judiciary Appropriation Bill" – and why that amount is NOT identified on the Bill's first page² – or thereafter.

² The amount would appear to be the addition of the cumulative "Appropriations" figures in the four charts scattered in the "Judiciary Appropriation Bill": at p.1: \$2,834,468,000, plus at p.7: \$364,918,000, plus

- (12) records as to what is the total dollar amount of the “Reappropriations” requested by the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill”³ – and why that amount is NOT identified on the Bill’s first page – or thereafter.
- (13) records reflecting the dollar amount requested by the Judiciary’s FY2026-27 budget submission for what it identifies in its “Introduction” under the heading “Core Operations Funding Summary” (at p. ii) as:

“A salary increase of 2% for all judges and justices, as authorized by the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation in 2023” (underlining added) –

then transmogrified in the budget’s section on “Courts of Original Jurisdiction” as “Funding is also included for a 2% judicial salary increase, as required by law” (at p. 4) and repeated as “a 2% judicial salary increase, as required by law” (at pp. 11, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 29) and, likewise, in its sections on the “Court of Appeals” (at p. 56) and “Appellate Court Operations” (at p. 59) as “a 2% judicial salary increase, as required by law (underlining added).⁴

- (14) records reflecting why the “Judiciary Appropriation Bill” contains no line item for the dollar amount of the “salary increase of 2% for all judges and justices, as authorized by the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation in 2023”.
- (15) records as to why the Judiciary’s FY26-27 budget submission for its “Attorney Discipline Program” – part of “Appellate Auxiliary Operations” (at pp. 84-85) – seeks \$17,392,000, with an accompanying text stating that this is “an increase of \$0.1 million (0.6%) over the current year adjusted appropriation” – without revealing that the Judiciary’s FY25-26 budget request of \$17,287,000 for the “Attorney Discipline Program (at pp. 81-82) was \$486,853 LESS than its FY24-25 request of \$17,773,853 (at pp. 107-109), in other words, the current request is \$381,853 LESS than the request of two years ago.

at p.8: \$60,000,000, equals \$3,259,386,000, plus, at p.9: \$1,193,011,000 in general state charges, equals a total of \$4,452,397,000 in “Appropriations”. This is the “All Funds Total” that appears at the bottom of the second chart (at vii) as the “FY 2027 Requested”.

³ 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: \$103,781,000, plus at p.7: \$161,000,000, plus, at p.8, \$54,050,000, plus at p.9: \$261,400,000, for a total of \$580,231,000 in “Reappropriations”.

⁴ This is the same request as is the subject of [CJA’s FOIL/records request of today’s date](#) entitled “The 2% Salary Increase for Judges & Justices in the Judiciary’s FY2026-27 Budget Submission – & in Governor Hochul’s Legislative/Judiciary Budget Bill S.9001/A.10001”.

- (16) 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,⁵ the comparable section of [the FY26-27 budget submission](#) (at pp. 39-42), identically to its [FY25-26 budget submission](#) (at pp. 39-42), omits the [Office of the Inspector General](#) whose jurisdiction includes non-judicial personnel – and a search of the FY26-27 budget submission brings up ZERO results.
- (17) records reflecting the Judiciary's intended FY26-27 appropriation for the Office of the Inspector General – and what the appropriation was for FY25-26.

Thank you.

s/ Elena Sassower

cc: Office of Court Administration FOIL Officer/Assistant Deputy Counsel Sevil Barber
Senate Finance Committee Chair Krueger & Ranking Member O'Mara
Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chair Pretlow & Ranking Member Ra
Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Sepulveda & Ranking Member Palumbo
Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair Lavine & Ranking Member Tannousis

⁵ 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.