Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally:

Hello and welcome to this conference entitled, Let's Talk AI and Access to Justice: How Law Schools, Civil Legal Services and the Courts Can Harness Technology to Address the Justice Gap. I am Judge Shahabuddeen Ally, the Supervising Judge of New York County Civil Court, as well as a co-chair of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. I have the pleasure of co-chairing that Commission with two wonderful individuals, co-chair Helaine Barnett and co-chair Justice Christina Ryba.

This is the 12th year that the Permanent Commission has convened this conference. A very encouraging number is that we have registrants from all 15 New York State-based law schools who are attending and participating in this conference. I have the distinct honor now to introduce one of the individuals who will be giving opening statements on behalf of the New York State Court System, our Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Zayas. Biography information has been provided to all of you as part of your registration materials.

I do encourage you to read all of the information. Judge Zayas is the highest-ranking administrative judge within the State and a champion for all things bridging the gap of access to justice. So with that, Judge Zayas, I'll turn it over to you.

Hon. Joseph Zayas:

Thank you, Judge Ally. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our 2024 Law School Access to Justice Conference. I am grateful to have been asked to make opening remarks at this important event. I'd like to thank the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice and its dedicated staff for organizing today's conference.

Thank you as well to Fordham University School of Law for partnering with the Commission to convene this conference, and particularly to Dean Matthew Diller, a member of the Commission who has been actively involved in organizing these law school conferences every year. Thank you.

I truly appreciate the wide-ranging work of the Access to Justice Commission, and I'm thankful in particular to its long-tenured chair, Helaine Barnett, for her tireless efforts in leading the Commission, I want to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Justices Shah Ally and Christina Ryba on their recent appointment as the Commission's two new co-chairs.

I am fully confident that they both will make extraordinary contributions to the work of the Commission as they work closely with co-chair Helaine Barnett. It is really gratifying that the Commission has been hosting these annual conferences to explore the role law schools can play in expanding and improving access to justice for all New Yorkers.

Today's conference will focus on ways in which law schools, legal services providers and the courts together can harness artificial intelligence technology to address the justice

gap. This is a very appropriate theme to explore and not merely because AI and its use in the legal profession has been a trendy topic for the past year or so.

Beyond the possibilities and problems AI presents for the courts and for large law firms, this new technology offers certain efficiencies that can make it possible for lawyers and organizations with limited resources to provide more legal services for more clients. The training that lawyers need in order to provide those services begins in law school. And my view right now is it's a great time to be a law student.

AI technology is providing a whole new set of innovative tools for practicing law. When I was in law school at Columbia in the mid-1980s, those tools were called books, but the practice of law was already beginning to change with the introduction of electronic research through Westlaw and Lexis. And now, just a few decades later, I am being introduced gradually and perhaps a bit haltingly, but inevitably, to the world of AI.

I am a member of the AI Rapid Response Team formed by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators in conjunction with the National Center for State Courts to examine some of the immediate issues related to the use of AI in state courts.

Also, I recently formed here in New York an Advisory Committee on Artificial Intelligence and the Courts whose mission will include examining the use of AI tools in the courts and identifying the opportunities presented by AI to improve the administration of justice in the New York State court system.

I have learned that the advent of AI technology offers exciting new ways to address gaps in the services received by those members of our state's population who are in the greatest need. There are AI programs that can be implemented by the courts to help litigants, including the unrepresented, navigate the judicial system.

And when time-saving AI tools are made available to legal services providers and law students, and practicing lawyers are trained to use them properly, the effect can be the same as if additional staff had been hired. In this way, AI can help level the playing field between the underrepresented and litigants with ample resources.

In short, I believe a collaborative approach to using AI technology among law schools, our courts, legal service providers and the bar will yield successful results in narrowing the access to justice gap. Thank you to everyone for your participation. I hope you will enjoy what is sure to be an informative and inspiring conference. At this time, I'll give it back to Judge Ally.

Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally:

Thank you, Judge Zayas, for your remarks and thank you as always for your leadership in this area. This is a partnership and a collaboration. Our lead partner from the law school area is Fordham University School of Law. So at this time, I would like to turn it over to

Dean Matthew Diller, who is also a member of the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. Dean Diller?

Dean Matthew Diller:

Thank you, Judge Ally, and thank you, Judge Zayas. And I want to just say welcome to all of you who are joining us today from both within our great state of New York and frankly across the country. Since we have transitioned this conference into a digital Zoom format, a webinar format, it has enabled us to reach and involve a much broader range of participants.

And I think that's all for the good. I just want to say a couple of words at the outset and then we'll plunge into the first plenary session. And the first is that I'm very grateful to the Office of Court Administration and to the New York court system for being so firmly behind both this conference and the Access to Justice Commission and the cause of access to justice.

And it's great to be in a state where the court system is working towards the goal that others out in the field are to address the crisis in access to justice and devoting resources, attention, creativity, and ingenuity to it. And the court system has backed up this conference and the Commission over the course of its 12 plus years of existence. I particularly want to thank today Barbara Mulé and Rochelle Klempner from the Office of Court Administration who played a key role in putting this conference together.

And then I just want to talk for a moment about this conference from my perspective as a law school dean, which is it's very important to me that we educate students who will be prepared to go out there and make positive contributions towards addressing the crisis of access to justice in the court system today, both in New York, across the country, and as broadly as possible.

And that means a number of things. It means equipping our students with the skills and knowledge base, both of the crisis and the problem, and also with creative ways of solving it and moving forward so that the crisis in access to justice gets solved at some point. And so I have that great hope in our students, that they're going to go forth and do great things.

But it won't happen on its own. We need to give them knowledge of the crisis and also a sense of it and a sense of the dimensions and the skills to represent clients, often clients who are facing extreme situations and tremendous distress. So that's our goal on the law school end of this. And we can't do that in isolation. We need to do it in conversation with lawyers out there in the field, with the court system. We need sources of input into what we should be focused on.

And in the course of our educational mission, we also happen to run a lot of programs, clinical programs that represent clients, public service programs, conferences, we

publish journals, all of which can and should have some role in helping to address the crisis in access to justice. We need to do it in coordination and in collaboration with the lawyers and others working directly in the field on these issues.

We want to be focused on the issues that count and the issues that matter rather than constructing programs that are not addressed at the salient issues. So we need help and feedback on that. And that is what brings us to creating this conference in the first place, which we did 12 years ago, which we've held annually.

The idea is to bring practitioners, the courts and those of us on the law school side together to work together to puzzle through some of the most challenging issues and some of the opportunities that are out there. One of the things that I love about this conference and that excites me is that it reflects all these different perspectives as well as students and others.

And today's topic could not be more timely. I don't know about the rest of you, but I think about artificial intelligence in this context with both excitement and energy — as giving us a new tool to address long-standing problems — and in awe and wonder at how powerful it is and the things that it can do for good, but also anxiety and concern that used the wrong way, it'll make things worse rather than better.

The key here is how do we use it the right way? How do we help guide it? What should we on the law school end be teaching our students about it, both its potential, its promise, what to be concerned about and careful about, and what skills to use it most effectively? So with that, I think we have a fantastic program lined up for this afternoon with a great opening plenary that will give us an overview, and then with breakout sessions that will focus on more specific things.

But in the end, we will reconvene in this webinar using your same webinar link to try and put it all together before the end of the day. I just want to say a word of thanks to our planning committee, which worked tremendously hard on this. And particularly I want to call out Kim Diana Connolly at Buffalo Law School, Ray Brescia at Albany Law School, Donna Lee at CUNY Law School, Jenny Ortiz at St. John's, Elyse Diamond at Pace, and Ron Lazebnik at Fordham.

I also want to thank the Fordham Office of Public Programming and Media Services led by Shanelle Holley and Ray Nunez for helping to bring us together and to coordinate. As you will see when you look at the links, this is an effort of multiple law schools working together to present today's conference. So I'm grateful to all of you. Thank you for being here. And at this point, I'm excited to get the plenary session underway and to learn something, together with all of you. Thank you.

Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally:

Thank you, Dean Diller, for your remarks. It shows that the collaboration between our court system and our law schools could yield very interesting and exciting results. Also, thank you to Dean Diller who helped me out by making some of the acknowledgments. I won't have to go through them. I like to thank those involved in the planning and convening of this program, in particular, Fordham University and the individuals that the dean has mentioned, as well as the members of the planning committee that the dean mentioned.

I would like to acknowledge the CLE coordinators of the law schools: Lisa Rivage from Albany Law, Lisa Mueller from Albany Law, and Claire McKeever from St. John's Law. I would like to thank and acknowledge the Permanent Commission's Staff Counsel, Rochelle Klempner and Barbara Mulé.

There are some housekeeping rules that I would like to review with everyone before we begin. The Zoom links, you're using the zoom link right now as the plenary session, and that will be the link for the closing plenary as well.

Links for concurrent sessions are in your outline agenda. They also will be placed in the chat. The concurrent sessions do have capacity limits. You will receive a message should those limits be reached. If those limits are reached and you receive a message, please select another session. CLE information for attorneys. The program has been accredited for three and a half credits of CLE. You should have received two emails that included CLE instructions, information forms, and conference materials.

The information is also posted on the conference agenda webpage. You must be on time for the sessions to receive full CLE credit. CLE codes will be announced during the session and, very important, will not be repeated. Follow the instructions on the forms related to the sessions you're attending to complete and submit course evaluation and affidavits. A representative from the Office of Public Programs will be online to respond to any CLE related questions. The email address is in the chat. The conference is being recorded and the recordings will be posted online at some point after the conference.

So at this point, I would like to turn the session over to Dean Joseph Landau, who's the incoming dean of Fordham Law School. I had the opportunity to read his biography, and I just want to say one thing, that he is a self-professed lover of math as I am. So I think the Dean is already onto a good start. He'll be moderating the next session, AI and the Legal Profession: The Implications for Law Schools and Access to Justice. So Dean, the floor is yours.