

Minnesota Judicial Branch Overview & FY24-25 Budget Request

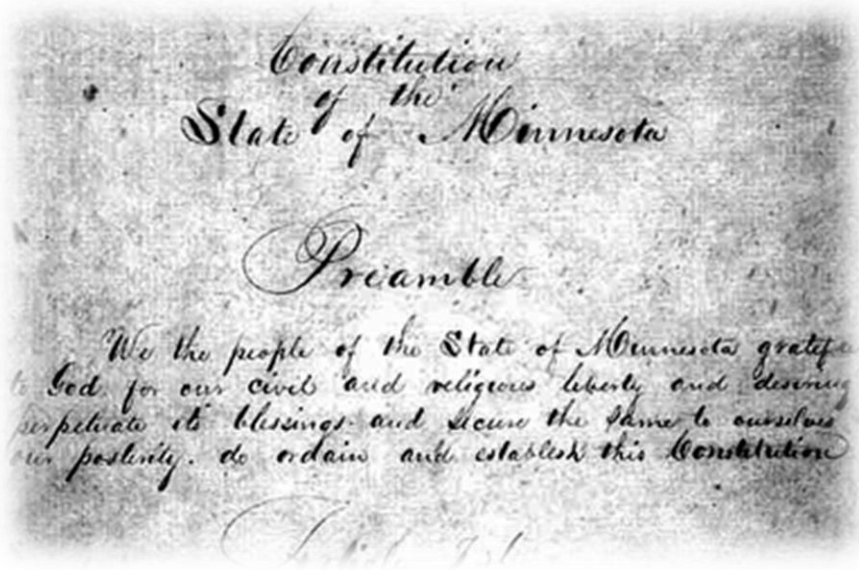
February 24, 2023



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**

Minnesota Constitution

Article 1, Section 8



"Every person is entitled to...
obtain justice **freely** and
without purchase, completely
and without denial, **promptly**
and **without delay**,
conformable to the laws."

Minnesota Judicial Branch: By the Numbers



Three levels:

- Supreme Court
- Court of Appeals
- 87 District Courts



322 Judges



Approx. 2,500 employees



103 Locations



860,604 cases filed in 2021



\$768.6 million
FY22-23 budget

FY24-25 Budget Request Overview

- The judges and staff of the Minnesota Judicial Branch undertook historic efforts to maintain access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As our courts emerge from this time of crisis, we need the Legislature's support to:
 - Address Judicial Branch workforce challenges.
 - Eliminate the pandemic criminal case backlog.
 - Sustain remote court hearings and other innovations.
 - Fund other priorities, such as: psychological examinations, treatment courts, and court interpreters.



Addressing Judicial Branch Workforce Challenges

MJB Workforce Challenges

- Like many employers, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is facing significant issues with employee recruitment/retention.
- **Key Challenge:** Judicial Branch compensation has fallen significantly behind other state and local government employers:
 - An FY22 analysis showed average Judicial Branch wages 5-10% behind similar public sector employers.
 - Without a legislative appropriation, **judicial officers and court staff did not receive a salary increase in FY23** – meaning the Judicial Branch fell further behind public sector peers.

Without a competitive compensation structure, Minnesota's courts are struggling to attract and keep qualified judicial officers and court staff.

MJB Compensation Falling Behind

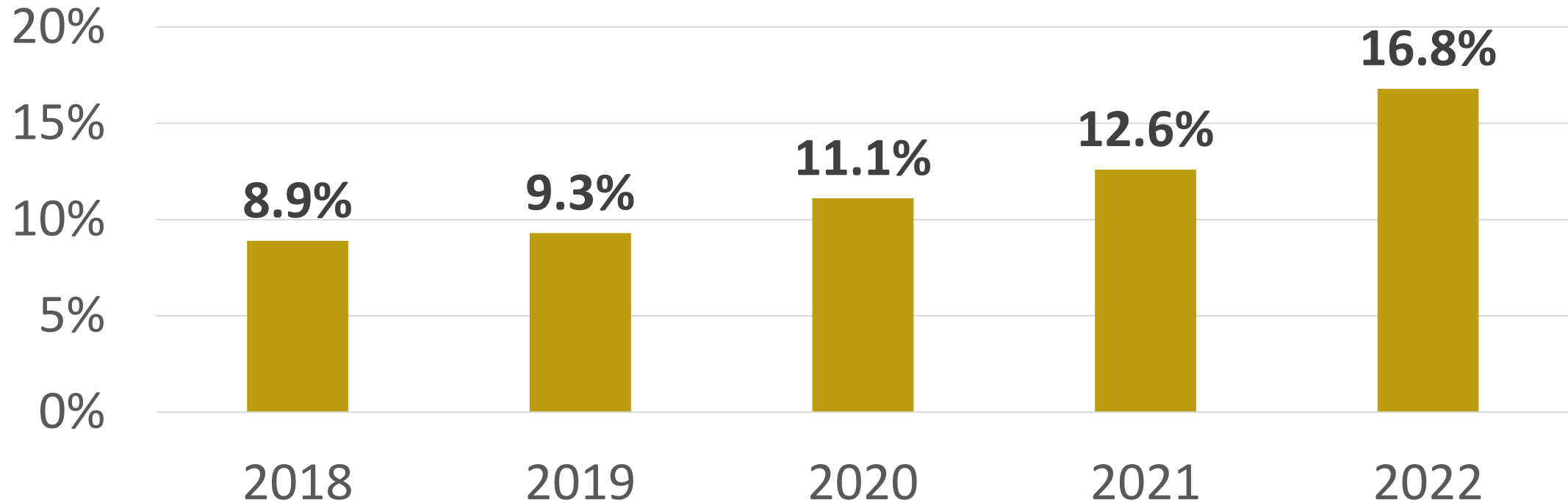
Salary progression example: Executive Branch vs. Judicial Branch

	Year 1 - FY19		Year 2 - FY20		Year 3 - FY21		Year 4 - FY22	
Executive	Merit	ATB	Merit	ATB	Merit	ATB	Merit	ATB
\$20.00	2.50%	2.00%	2.50%	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
	\$20.50	\$20.91	\$21.43	\$21.91	\$22.46	\$23.02	\$23.60	\$24.19
Judicial								
\$20.00	2.50%	--	2.50%	--	2.50%	--	0.00%	--
	\$20.50		\$21.01		\$21.54		\$21.54	

Court employee makes 12% less than Executive Branch counterpart after just four years.

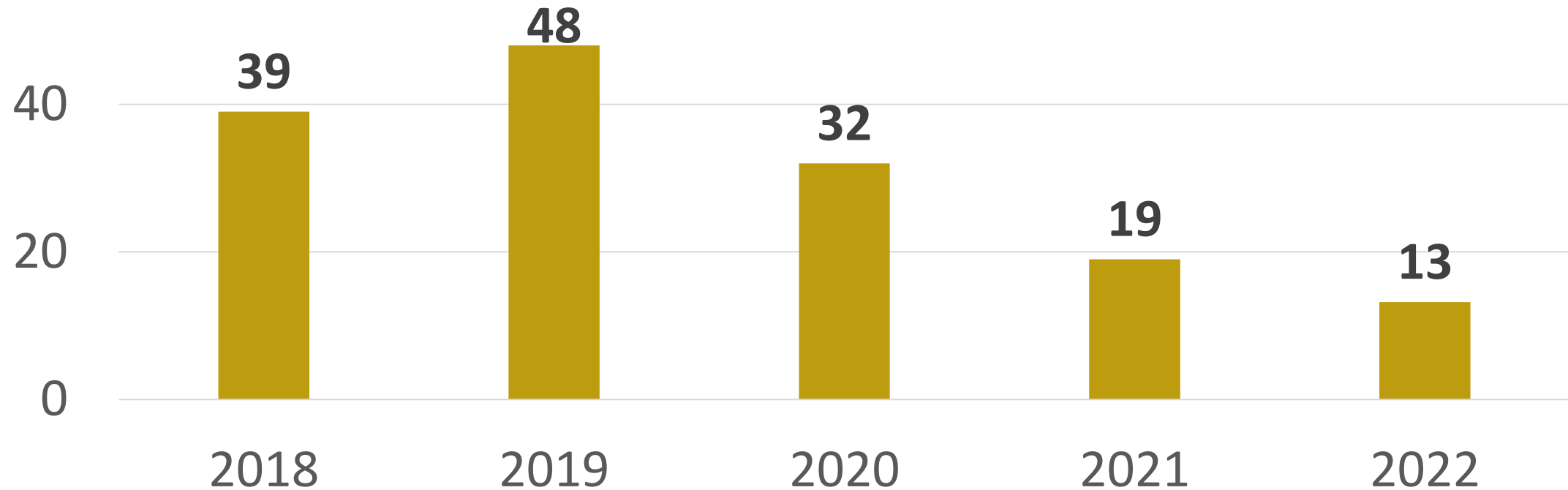
Recruitment & Retention Struggles

Annual MJB Staff Turnover 2018-2022



Recruitment & Retention Struggles

Average Number of Applicants Per Job Posting 2018-2022



Recruitment & Retention Struggles

“We’ve had a very good employee **leave court service** to work for the city at \$10 more per hour.”

“One employee **left court service** for a higher paying job in the County Attorney’s Office.”

“Candidates tell us they are **turning down our offers** because they accepted another job that paid \$3 and \$5 more per hour.”

“We recently had a **judge resign** to go work for the County Attorney’s office. It is usually the other way around, but we have seen many judges leaving the Judicial Branch.”

“Even when offers are made the next day after an interview, many times the **applicant has already accepted another, higher paying job.**”

Impact of Staffing Shortages

- Court hearings are being postponed because of a lack of judges and courtroom staff.
- Some courts are considering reducing/closing customer service windows.
- Extended vacancies mean courts often do not have enough staff to assist court users, manage case records, and provide courtroom support in a timely manner.
- Courts are forced to prioritize case processing and hearings, creating delays in housing court; divorce, parenting time, and custody cases; and other important matters.

Funding Request: Compensation

- The Minnesota Judicial Branch requests funding to:
 - Increase judge compensation by 9% in FY24, and 6% in FY25.
 - Provide a 9% compensation pool for employees in FY24, and 6% in FY25.
 - Fund the employer share of health insurance premium increases.

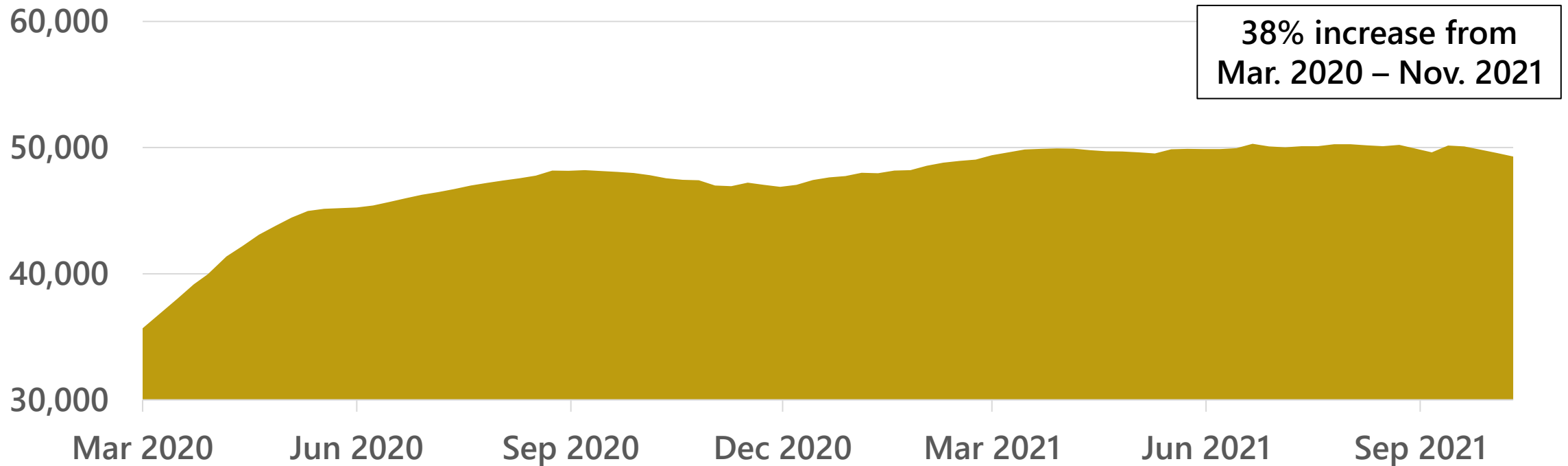
Addressing Workforce Challenges		
FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$29.542 m.	\$52.958 m.	\$82.482 m.



Tackling the Pandemic Criminal Case Backlog

Pandemic Backlog

Pending felony and gross misdemeanor cases March 2020-November 2021



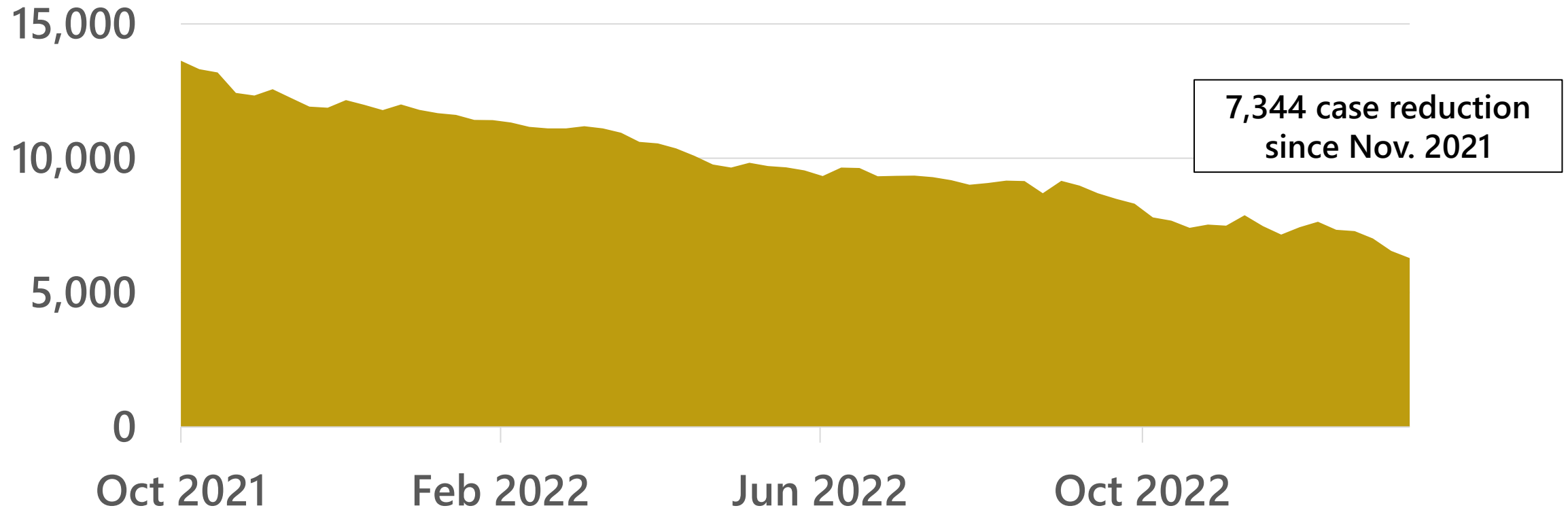
Backlog Reduction Strategy



- Each judicial district developed a localized plan to reduce the backlog of Major Criminal cases, beginning Nov. 1, 2021.
- The Judicial Branch secured federal pandemic relief funding to help fund backlog reduction efforts, while minimizing impact to other court operations.
- Districts are utilizing senior judges, temporary staff, special events, and other strategies to reduce backlog.

Backlog Reduction Success

Major Criminal case backlog October 29, 2021 – February 10, 2023



Funding Request: Backlog Reduction

- The federal funding used to implement our backlog reduction strategy will soon expire.
- The Judicial Branch is seeking \$8.4 million in one-time funding to continue using senior judges and temporary staff to help eliminate the remainder of the pandemic backlog.

Tackle Criminal Case Backlog		
FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$8.421 m.	-	\$8.421 m.



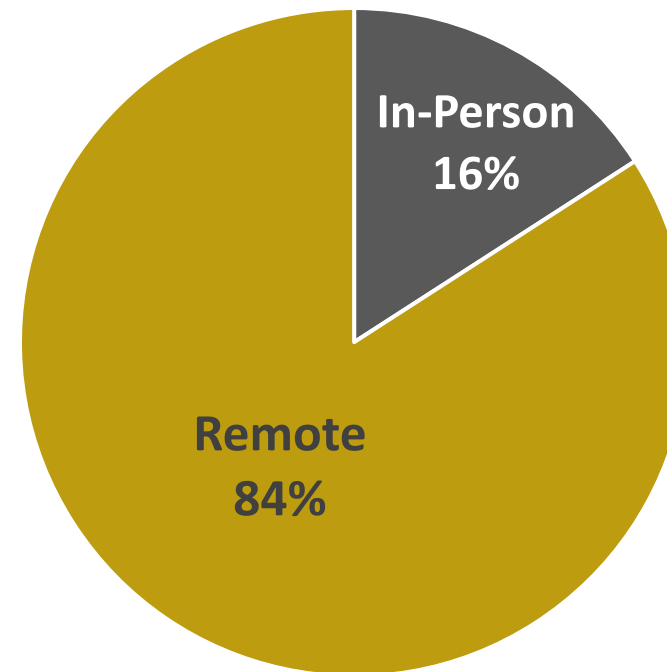
Remote Hearings & Other Courtroom Technology

Remote Hearings

- Remote (online) court hearings played a crucial role in preserving access to justice during the pandemic.
- During the first two years of the pandemic, more than 80% of all district court hearings were held online.

Statewide district court hearings held

July 2020 – June 2022



Remote Hearing Feedback

Attorney/Justice Partner Feedback

- Strong support for remote hearings:
 - Reduced travel time/costs
 - More reliable scheduling
 - Easier for clients to appear
 - Increased victim participation
 - Civil legal aid can support clients across the state

Litigant Feedback

- Strong preference for attending hearings remotely:
 - Reduced travel time/costs
 - Easier to attend
 - Avoid work/childcare scheduling issues

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

- Based on positive feedback from court users, the Judicial Branch has committed to the long-term use of remote hearings.
- The **oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy** took effect June 6, 2022:
 - Sets guidelines for how district courts use both in-person and remote hearings to deliver access to justice.



Funding Request: Technology

- The Judicial Branch is seeking \$7.4 million in FY24 to continue modernizing courtroom technology to support remote and hybrid court hearings, upgrade interpreter equipment and capabilities, and implement other needed enhancements.

Remote Hearings & Courtroom Technology		
FY24	FY25	FY24-25
\$7.400 m.	-	\$7.400 m.



Other Court Funding Priorities

Mandated Psychological Services

- The Judicial Branch is experiencing significant increases in the court-related cost of providing psychological examinations in criminal and civil commitment cases.
- From FY19 to FY22:
 - The number of criminal examinations increased by 28%.
 - The number of civil commitment examinations increased by 48%.
 - **The overall cost of providing these services grew by 58%.**

Request

\$1.996 million in annual funding to offset the increased cost of providing these statutorily mandated services.

Sustaining Treatment Courts

- There are currently four treatment court programs, established under federal grants, that will soon expire:
 - Beltrami County Drug Court
 - Goodhue County Drug Court
 - St. Louis County Veterans Court
 - Third District Veterans Court (serving 11 counties in southeastern Minnesota)

Request

\$422,000 in annual funding to add these programs to the state's treatment court funding formula.

Court Interpreter Payment Rates

- In 2021, the Legislature provided a one-time appropriation to increase the payment rates for contract court interpreters during the FY22-23 biennium.
- The Judicial Branch increased payment rates for all contract court interpreters by 8%. Without permanent funding, these payment rate increases will expire at the end of FY23.

Request

\$200,000 in annual funding to permanently fund these higher payment rates.

Overall Funding Request

	FY24	FY25	FY24-25
Addressing Workforce Challenges	\$29.542 m.	\$52.958 m.	\$82.482 m.
Tackling Criminal Case Backlog	\$8.421 m.	-	\$8.421 m.
Remote Hearing & Court Technology	\$7.400 m.	-	\$7.400 m.
Mandated Psychological Services	\$1.996 m.	\$1.996 m.	\$3.992 m.
Maintaining Four Treatment Courts	\$0.422 m.	\$0.422 m.	\$0.844 m.
Court Interpreter Payment Rate	\$0.200 m.	\$0.200 m.	\$0.400 m.
Total FY24-25 Budget Request	\$47.963 m.	\$55.576 m.	\$103.539 m.

Thank you!



**MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH**