IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
(Electronic Devices in the Courtroom or Hearing Room)

WHEREAS, pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-105(b)(12), the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, Maryland ("Circuit Court") is responsible for the overall administration of the Circuit Court by taking necessary measures to ensure the effective management of the Court, including maintaining order, decorum, and security in courtrooms; and

WHEREAS, the unrestricted use and possession of electronic devices in courtrooms or hearing rooms may impact the administration of justice and prompt disposition of all matters, by disrupting court proceedings; compromising security; interfering with the obligations and duties of litigants and witnesses; and/or facilitating unauthorized recordings or transmission of courtroom or hearing room activities; and

WHEREAS, maintaining the safety of all conrthouse visitors and employees is of the utmost importance and is crucial to ensure the fair, efficient, and effective administration of the courthouse; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-208(a)(1), a "court facility" is defined as the entire building in which the Circuit Court is located; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-208, the term "Electronic Device" means (A) a cell phone, a computer, and any other device that is capable of transmitting, receiving, or recording messages, images, sounds, data, or other information by electronic means or that, in appearance, purports to be a cell phone, computer, or such other device; and (B) a camera, regardless of whether it operates electronically, mechanically, or otherwise and regardless of whether images are recorded by using digital technology, film, light-sensitive plates, or other

means. "Electronic device" does not include court equipment used by judicial officials or personnel; and

WHEREAS, for purposes of this Order, interference with court proceedings or the work of court personnel includes, but is not limited to, chiming, vibration noises, or other sounds emanating from electronic devices; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office ("Sheriff's Office") is responsible for establishing and maintaining security in and about the Circuit Court; and

WHEREAS, for purposes of this Order, "security personnel" refer to Sheriff's Office deputies and contract security guards who are monitored by the Sheriff's Office; and

NOW, THEREFORE, upon consideration of the foregoing, it is this 1st day of October, 2026, hereby:

ORDERED, that subject to the exceptions below, during all court proceedings and until further administrative order of this Court, no person may use any electronic device within any courtroom or hearing room of the Circuit Court; and it is further

ORDERED, that this Order does not apply to the judges, magistrates, court personnel or security personnel of the Circuit Court; the Sheriff or their personnel; law enforcement acting in the performance of their official duties; or other individuals authorized by the Court; and it is further

ORDERED, that attorneys of record, their employees and agents and self-represented litigants may use electronic devices while seated at counsel table, provided (1) the electronic device is not used in a manner that interferes with or disrupts court proceedings or the work of court personnel; (2) the electronic device makes no audible sound; (3) the electronic device is not used to transmit live or record any part of the proceeding, including by photo, audio recording, or video recording; (4) the electronic device is not used to communicate with any other person during

the proceeding without the express permission of the Court; and (5) the use complies with any other directives issued by the presiding judge or magistrate; and it is further

ORDERED, that an electronic device shall not be used in a manner that interferes with court proceedings or the work of court personnel at the Circuit Court; and it is further

ORDERED, that pursuant to Rule 16-208(b)(2)(B), except in accordance with this Rule, Rules 16-502, 16-503, 16-504, 16-603, or as expressly permitted by the Administrative Judge, while within the court facility that houses the Circuit Court, a person shall not (i) take or record a photograph, video, or other visual image, or (ii) transmit a photograph, video, or other visual image from or within the court facility; and it is further

ORDERED, that pursuant to Rule 16-208(b)(2)(F), upon a finding that the circumstances of a particular case raise special security or privacy issues that justify a restriction on the possession or use of electronic devices, the Administrative Judge or the presiding judge or magistrate may enter an order limiting or prohibiting the possession of electronic devices in designated areas of the court facility, including courtrooms or hearing rooms, and such order shall provide for notice of the designated areas and for the collection of the devices and their return when the individual who possessed the device leaves the designated areas within the court facility; and it is further

ORDERED, that the Administrative Judge, presiding judge or magistrate, or court personnel conducting a ceremony or other event may grant permission to allow a photograph, video, or other visual image to be taken during a wedding, adoption, graduation, swearing-in, or seminal ceremony taking place at the courthouse; and it is further

ORDERED, that pursuant to Rule 16-208(b)(2)(D), no electronic devices shall be brought into a jury deliberation room; and it is further

ORDERED, that security personnel or other court personnel may at any time confiscate and retain an electronic device that is used in violation of this Order, subject to further order of the

court; and pursuant to Rule 16-208(c), no liability shall accrue to the security personnel or other court personnel for any loss or misplacement of or damage to the electronic device; and it is further

ORDERED, that any person found in violation of this Order may be directed to remove the electronic device from the courtroom, hearing room, or courthouse; surrender the electronic device temporarily to security personnel or other court personnel; and/or leave the courtroom, hearing room, or courthouse; and it is further

ORDERED, that pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-208, any person who willfully violates this Order may be found in contempt of court and sanctioned in accordance with Maryland Rules in Title 15, Chapter 200; and it is further

ORDERED, that nothing in this Order limits the authority of the Administrative Judge, a presiding judge or magistrate to impose additional restrictions or grant exceptions in a particular case when necessary to serve the interest of justice; and it is further

ORDERED, that pursuant to Maryland Rule 16-208, this Administrative Order shall be posted prominently at the Circuit Court and on the Court website; and it is further

ORDERED, that the *Administrative Orders dated June 13, 1996 (visual imagery); May 24, 2005 (visual imagery); May 5, 2009 (electronic devices); and September 5, 2023 (visual imagery)* shall be and hereby are rescinded effective immediately.

Karla N. Smith, Administrative Judge
Circuit Court for Montgomery County, Maryland