

PRESS RELEASE

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**OATH ANNOUNCES MORE THAN 100,000 CASES HEARD  
REMOTELY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, KEEPING NEW  
YORKERS WHO CHALLENGE CIVIL SUMMONSES SAFE AND  
HEALTHY**

*City's Administrative Law Court Leads Nation in Access to Justice Efforts During COVID-19 Pandemic. According to Available Data, OATH Has Heard More Cases in Real-Time with All Parties Appearing Remotely Than Any Other Municipal or State Court in the Country.*

*OATH's Rapid and Unprecedented Transition to Offer Hearings by Phone has Ensured New Yorkers Continue to Have a Full and Fair Opportunity to Contest Civil Summonses at a Hearing Before the City's Central, Independent Administrative Law Court.*

**New York, NEW YORK** – On February 12, 2021 the NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH), which is the City's independent administrative law court and where nearly every City agency files civil summonses for hearings announced that since New York City shut down in mid-March, it has conducted a hearing by phone on more than 100,000 cases.

Providing access to hearings on City-issued summonses allows people to challenge summonses issued by City agencies for quality of life and regulatory violations such as those issued by the Department of Sanitation, Department of Buildings, Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Environmental Protection, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, Fire Department and civil summonses issued by the NYPD. OATH is also responsible for holding hearings on summonses issued by the Mayor's Office of Special Enforcement which is currently conducting enforcement on alleged violations of COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions along with the City's Health Department and Sherriff's Office.

"OATH's top priority is to provide New Yorkers with access to justice; its stated mission is to provide a fair and impartial place where New Yorkers go to have their day in court so that they can tell a neutral decision-maker their defense and why they believe a City summons should be dismissed," said **OATH Commissioner Joni Kletter**. "What we have shown over the past year is that fulfilling this vitally important mission does not require a physical space. OATH can provide New Yorkers with access to just outcomes on City-issued summonses while also providing convenience and a healthy and safe way for New Yorkers to appear. No New Yorker should ever have to choose between protecting their health and safety and being able to fight a summons they believe should be dismissed."

In 2019, 90% of hearings were held with the parties appearing in-person at OATH hearing centers throughout the five boroughs, while 10% of respondents had a remote hearing. In mid-March, OATH was able to immediately transition from its almost exclusively in-person operations to fully remote operations by implementing new processes and policies to allow all enforcement agencies to appear by phone for every type of case. For the first time ever, this allowed both the respondents and the summons-issuing agencies to appear remotely. From the beginning of March through December of 2020, 88% of hearings were conducted remotely, almost completely reversing the methods used by OATH to hold hearings. By June of 2020, OATH was averaging remote hearings for 245 cases a day. OATH continued to build up its infrastructure and capacity and by the end of 2020 OATH was averaging remote hearings for 850 cases a day.

“The ingenuity, resourcefulness and know-how of OATH’s executive leadership team and the daily hard work, flexibility and teamwork exhibited by OATH staff in the Clerk’s Office and in the Hearings Division made it possible for OATH to seamlessly transition to remote operations and to be the court that leads the nation in the number of cases heard and decided with all parties appearing remotely,” continued **Commissioner Joni Kletter**.

“Commissioner Kletter and her team have transformed OATH’s operations to best serve New Yorkers in a time of unprecedented change,” said **Counsel to the Mayor Kapil Longani**. “This milestone is a testament to the agency’s creativity, transparency, and commitment to upholding the values that drive this Administration—fairness and equity.”

To have a hearing by phone to respond to a summons, respondents contact OATH prior to the scheduled hearing date. They are then provided with confirmation of the hearing date and time, and a PIN number to check in for their hearing. Evidence is submitted via email during the proceeding. Respondents who believe there may be a valid, extenuating circumstance that requires them to appear in person can make a request to the Hearing Officer. As was done at in-person hearings, the written decision is sent by mail to the parties. More than 40% of summonses that are challenged by respondents by participating in the OATH hearing end up being dismissed.

OATH’s successful implementation of remote operations and the overwhelming positive feedback on the convenience of the new process led OATH [to announce to the public](#) last June that it would continue its remote hearings until at least the end of 2020. OATH is proud to announce that it will continue to nearly exclusively hold remote hearings until at least the middle of 2021.

### **About OATH**

The NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) is the City’s independent administrative law court where nearly all City enforcement agencies such as the Departments of Sanitation, Buildings, Health and Mental Hygiene, Parks, Environmental Protection, Fire, NYPD, Consumer and Worker Protection, and the Taxi and Limousine

Commission, among others, file their summonses for hearings. OATH, however, is not the court that is responsible for holding hearings on parking or traffic tickets.

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