



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION**  
**Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings**

**Family Court**  
**(New Candidate)**

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1. Why do you want to serve as a Family Court Judge?

I have spent a significant portion of my legal career advocating for the families and children in South Carolina. While prosecuting juvenile offenders in Charleston County, it was with a clear purpose of rehabilitating and providing juveniles with services to help them become productive members of their communities. As a managing attorney for South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS), I advocated not only for the safety and protection of our state's children, but also worked to reunify those children with their parents, when possible, to strengthen the families of South Carolina. I believe that our children and families are the foundation for our communities.

If we have a strong foundation, whether that is in two parent families, single parent families, individuals co-parenting or couples without children, we can deal with any troubles today in the hope that the children and adults of South Carolina may have a more peaceful future. I now have the privilege of representing individuals before the Family Court on a variety of cases. Whether these cases involve children or not, they deal with the very real and important needs and issues in my client's lives. The citizens of South Carolina are more likely to interact with the Family Court during their lives than any other Courts and it is my pleasure to guide them through the process and advocate for their interests. I look forward to continuing to serve the citizens of South Carolina as a Family Court judge.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if elected? Yes, I do plan to serve my full term if elected.
3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? Depending on the length of my full term, if elected, I may return to private practice.
4. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice? Yes.
5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

I would abide by the Judicial Canons regarding *ex parte* communications. As a judge, it would be my duty to afford every party in a proceeding the right to be heard and would always guard against the appearance of impropriety. In Family Court, where many of the litigants are self-represented, I would be vigilant about not engaging in *ex parte* communications. However, there are very specific circumstances where *ex parte* communications may be expressly authorized by law or warranted regarding issues of scheduling, administrative purposes or emergencies that do not address the substantive matters before the Court. If all parties consent, I may consult separately with the parties and their attorneys in an attempt to mediate issues before the Court. See Canon 3B (7), CJC.

6. If you disclosed something that had the appearance of bias, but you believed it would not actually prejudice your impartiality, what deference would you give a party that requested your recusal? Would you grant such a motion?

If my impartiality could reasonably be questioned, I would recuse myself from the case. If I or my immediate relatives have an economic interest in the subject matter or with a party to the proceeding or if I have either a personal bias or prejudice regarding a party or personal knowledge of a disputed fact, I will recuse myself even if I feel that I could remain impartial. The public at large needs to have confidence in the judiciary, and it would be my responsibility to avoid any conduct that may erode that confidence. There are occasions when the rule of necessity may override this

disqualification in cases when I am the only judge available, and the matter requires immediate judicial action. However, in those cases I would disclose the possible disqualification on the record and exercise reasonable efforts to transfer the case to another judge as soon as possible. See Canon 3 (E), CJC.

7. How would you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

I would disclose on the record the basis for my disqualification pursuant to the Judicial Cannons and, depending on the exact circumstances, for the parties and their attorneys to consider whether to waive my disqualification. If the parties and attorneys consider the disqualification, outside of my presence, and all the parties agree that I should not be disqualified I would participate in the proceeding after placing that agreement on the record. See Canon 3 (E) and (F), CJC.

8. What standards would you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?

I would not accept any gift or social invitation that, if accepted, would appear to be attempting to influence me, cast doubt on my ability to appear to remain impartial or demean my judicial office. When in doubt about accepting items, I believe it is important to seek guidance from the South Carolina State Ethics Commission, Court Administration, or other appropriate entities as well as Canon 4, CJC.

9. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge?

I would take appropriate action to help the individual address the problem to prevent any harm to the judicial office or legal system. Depending on the specific situation, I may speak to the individual directly, notify the individual's supervisor, or make a referral to the appropriate lawyer or judicial assistance program, such as Lawyers Helping Lawyers or the South Carolina Bar in accordance with Rule 428, SCACR. However, if the severity of the conduct warrants, I may have to take additional action and make a report to the appropriate disciplinary entity. See Canon 3 (D)(1) and (2), CJC.

10. Are you a member of any organization or association that, by policy or practice, prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.

To my knowledge, I do not belong to any organization or association that prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin.

11. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe.

I have supported my children's fund-raising activities through their school and extracurricular activities. I have also engaged in fund-raising activities for the American Cancer Society as part of its Relay for Life events.

12. Do you have any business activities that you would envision remaining involved with if elected to the bench? I do not have any business activities that I would remain involved with if elected to the bench.

13. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how would you handle the drafting of orders?

If the parties to an action are represented by counsel, I would request counsel draft the order pursuant to the Court's ruling from the bench or as set forth in the Court's instructions or memorandum. Due to numerous reasons, there will still be orders that I must personally draft. In my experience, it is best to draft orders when the case is still fresh in my mind. This would also increase judicial efficiency when orders are completed in a timely manner.

14. If elected, what method would you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

I would develop uniform procedures that would be used by everyone associated with my office. My staff and I would develop a specific tracking system to monitor drafting, receiving and executing all orders as well as maintaining awareness of future hearings. I believe it is important for me and my staff to constantly assess the

effectiveness of my policies and procedures and adjust as necessary to increase our efficiency.

15. If elected, what specific actions or steps would you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case?

I believe it is important for all individuals, including the Court, to treat all guardian ad litem with respect. Volunteer guardian ad litem, lay guardian ad litem, and attorney guardians, all serve an important role in Family Court. However, the Court still needs to assure the minor children's best interests are protected and any guardian ad litem must be competent, unbiased, and fully informed. This can be accomplished by carefully reviewing any guardian ad litem reports submitted to the Court and by questioning of the guardian ad litem by the parties or the Court. A guardian ad litem should only be relieved upon a finding that the guardian ad litem cannot carry out his or her duties or has been proven to be biased in the specific case.

16. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?

I do not believe a judge should take an active role in pushing a particular agenda or her own personal opinions or beliefs. However, as our society changes and evolves, there will be times when the Court is called upon to interpret the law and apply it to a new set of facts or circumstances that may not have been contemplated when the original law was enacted. In these circumstances, I believe the Court should make a reasoned, sound, and detailed decision concentrating on how the law is being applied to the specific set of facts in the case to make it clear to all individuals that the ruling is based on the Court's interpretation of the law and not the Court's own personal opinions and beliefs.

17. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities would you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system?

It is important for a Family Court judge to have a good working relationship with the Solicitor's Office, SCDSS and the local bar association. Meeting with these entities to develop a clear understanding of the Court's expectations and goals can assist in moving dockets in an efficient manner. Despite having an arduous

schedule as a judge, I would be open to speaking at Continuing Legal Education seminars, community events and various Bench/Bar committees that strive to improve the legal experience for every citizen of South Carolina.

18. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge would strain personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How would you plan to address this?

I do believe any job has inherent stress and poses a risk, placing strain on individuals' personal relationships. I am the wife of a veteran of the United States Marine Corps who served our country for seventeen years through numerous deployments while I remained home working and caring for our young children. During some of my husband's deployments, I was also working full-time as well as being the sole caregiver for our children. I was the Managing Attorney for SCDSS in Dorchester County and entered private practice in January 2021. All of these roles have placed an immense amount of pressure on me and my family. However, it has also taught my family to be open and honest in our communication to address these stressors and develop hobbies and activities as a form of relaxation. It is important for every individual to establish healthy boundaries to ensure the individual's physical and mental health. I have also discussed this opportunity and my desire to be a Family Court judge with my husband and my children. They have individually and collectively expressed that they unequivocally support me in "chasing my dream."

19. Would you give any special considerations to a pro se litigant in family court?

Although pro se litigants should be held to the same rules of civil procedure and evidence, I firmly believe the Court does need to keep a calm demeanor and may need to provide a more detailed explanation of the Court's expectation and rulings as it would otherwise provide to represented litigants. The Court should always remember that our courtrooms are open to all citizens, whether pro se or represented. Pro se litigants need to be treated in a manner that makes them feel comfortable enough to argue their cases while still maintaining the utmost respect for the Family Court.

20. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?  
No.

21. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?

A *de minimis* financial interest should not give an appearance of impropriety. However, pursuant to Canon 3, CJC, I would disclose the information to the parties and entertain arguments from any party regarding a motion for recusal.

22. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period?  
Yes.

23. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply?

A judge's demeanor should always be beyond reproach. First and foremost, a judge must be fair and impartial. However, it is also important for a judge to be polite, dignified, and respectful of all individuals, whether the judge is on the bench or out in the community. Even when not on the bench, a judge should be a positive reflection on not only the judicial office but the legal community as a whole.

24. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public who would appear before you, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant?

It is not appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, attorneys or pro se litigants who appear before the Court. Anger is a corrosive emotion that would result in an appearance that I had personal issues or feelings about a specific individual and may possibly call into question any ruling I would issue from the bench.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS ARE TRUE AND COMPLETE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

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Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_