



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

**Family Court
(Incumbent)**

Full Name: Tarita Andrea Dunbar

Business Address: Post Office Box 757 301 University Ridge Greenville, SC 29602

Business Telephone: (864) 467-5854

1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court Judge? I truly care for my fellow man. I love helping people solve their problems and giving guidance. I strive at every opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life. As a Family Court Judge, it is important to make people feel that I care, that I have listened, I was respectful, I was compassionate, and I was fair. It is a challenge but extremely rewarding when I succeed in my efforts. The job is extremely rewarding when a family or a juvenile is lifted from a crisis.
2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected? Yes
3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? No
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 do not engage in *ex parte* communications. The only circumstances may be to clarify a finding of fact, after you have made a decision. The only other exception would be to address the behavior of a lawyer suspected of suffering from a mental or substance problem.
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? I would give careful consideration to the request and more than likely grant the motion. I never want individuals to feel they were treated unfairly, and the court and Judge must always be above reproach.

7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative? My husband, who is a lawyer, and I do not involve ourselves in any financial or social activities that give the appearance of impropriety. I am not a member of any social clubs. My closest relatives are my mother and children and they are not involved in any social or financial matters that would have any appearance of impropriety.
8. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? I have been to one dinner with other fellow judges, my meal was less than \$30.00. I have taken out lawyers to lunch. Certain lawyers give all the judges and AA's cookies or candy for Christmas. I give the cookies and candy to the deputies, because I have dietary restrictions. I have never been offered anything of value nor would I accept anything of value if offered. I am more than grateful for the salary I have.
9. How do 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 consult with one of my senior Family Court Judges for advice. Also, I would contact the Office of Disciplinary Counsel with an anonymous question to make sure it was something I need to report. I would report to Office of Disciplinary Counsel any misconduct in violation of the Rules of Professional and Judicial Conduct.
10. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any social, community, or religious organizations? No. Please describe.
11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench? No.
12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders? The prevailing lawyer typically drafts the order. In the alternative, I draft the order if the order is insufficient or there is an undue delay in my receipt of the order.
13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? I communicate with my Administrative Assistant and record

whenever I take a matter under advisement. Also, if I have a difficult matter, I work on the weekends, and afterhours. I have worked on my days off. I do not rush to meet a deadline. Family court decisions are critical to people and I do not act hastily to meet a deadline and run the risk of jeopardizing the lives of the affected individuals, particularly children. Hence, I balance the deadline with making certain the decision is just and fair.

14. What specific actions or steps do you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case? I make certain only a duly qualified guardian ad litem is appointed in the cases over which I preside.
15. What is your philosophy on “judicial activism,” and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? Judicial activism is not a component of a judge’s duty, obligation and oath. I do not involve myself in promoting public policy.
16. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities do you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system? I am currently a member of the Commission on the Profession serving as liaison for the training for new Family Court judges. I am a member of Bench Bar Committee, which developed guidelines known as “Best Legal Practices” in Abuse and Neglect cases. The Supreme Court adopted through Administrative Order that Best Legal Practices shall be used as a reference guide in S.C. Family Courts. I am a member of the National Conference of Juvenile Family Court Judges and serve on two committees focusing on best practices for abused and delinquent youth. I am a member of the advisory group on abused and neglected delinquent youth with the SC Children’s Law Center. The group is working to prevent delinquency in youth, particularly African-Americans, who have been victims of abuse or neglect, and to prevent recidivism of these youth who are already involved with the juvenile justice system. We are developing and disseminating recommended court practices in this area. My goal for the future is to implement one family/one judge model in Greenville County, in which one judge hears all of a family’s issues. Currently, legal issues facing a family, regardless of how intertwined they may be, are heard by different judges and sometimes in different locations. The data is clear that when one judge hears all of a family’s issues, the results are better.

17. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge strains personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? I feel the most pressure involves worrying how my decisions affects both the children and their parents. How do you address this? My husband and I have actually grown closer since I became a judge. He is very patient when I am stressed about a decision I have to make. I have a strong spiritual faith. I pray a lot. I exercise, make sure to get plenty of outside time by taking hikes and enjoying nature. I adhere to a very strict diet. Finally, I discuss these type of troubling cases with my colleagues on the bench.
18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? No. I have no personal income aside from my employment.
19. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved? No. I would advise the parties of such and recuse myself from the case.
20. 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? No. If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.
21. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period? Yes.
22. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply? Show respect, patience, kindness, compassion, and calmness. These are the traits a judge must carry at all times. However, when the circumstances warrant, a judge must be firm, decisive and stern.
23. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, especially with a criminal defendant? No. Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? Anger is never appropriate. I try very hard not to show anger. I want to keep my job, which is a great motivator for keeping my emotions in check. Also, I take my mental health very seriously. I make it a priority to exercise, walk, and work in my yard as preventive measures, which keep these negative emotions in check.

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

Sworn to before me this ____ day of _____, 2019.

(Signature)

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: _____