



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

**Family Court**  
**(Incumbent)**

Full Name: Tarita A. Dunbar

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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge? I love my state and I love serving the citizens of the state as a Family Court judge. I am passionate about making a positive impact on children and families. I strive at every opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life. It is important that I make people feel that I care, I am respectful, I am compassionate, and I am fair. It is a challenge, but extremely rewarding when I succeed in my efforts. My job is especially fulfilling when a family or 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? I do not engage in *ex parte* communications. Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated? No, unless a member of the Bar is experiencing a mental or physical health malady that impacts his/her clients or the legal system.
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 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 children and they are not involved in any social or financial matters that would invoke an appearance of impropriety.
8. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? I don't accept social hospitality and gifts. Certain lawyers give all the judges and AA's cookies or candy for Christmas. I give the cookies or candy to my AA, 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 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 report to The Office of Disciplinary Counsel any misconduct which is in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct and Judicial Conduct.
10. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe. No
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 will draft the order if there is an undue delay in my receipt of the order or if the order is legally insufficient.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? Alerts on calendar. Daily communication 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. However, 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 a 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 normally appoint attorneys who regularly appear as guardian ad litem. In addition, I specifically restrict the responsibilities of the Guardian as required by the statute. I also make sure to ask the litigants are they satisfied with the services of the Guardian ad Litem.
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 participate on a subcommittee with other judges to ensure the legal processes and procedures meet the needs of self-represented litigants. I am currently a member of the Commission on the Profession with the goal of ensuring that the practice of law serves the client and the public good. I am a member of the SC Family Law American Inn of Court, which is comprised of legal professionals dedicated to improving the quality of family law practice and ensuring positive outcomes for families within the legal system. I engage in the community by speaking at schools and churches to enhance the understanding of the judicial system. I have several pending speaking engagements which will focus on ensuring family law practitioners are fully prepared for temporary and final hearings. My ultimate 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. I believe this is particularly important in abuse and neglect and juvenile cases. 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)? How do you address this? I feel the most pressure involves worrying how my decisions affects both the children and their parents. My husband and I have actually grown closer since I became a judge. He is still very patient when I am stressed about a decision I have to make. I have a strong spiritual faith. I pray for wisdom. 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 have a great group of colleagues on the bench who are very supportive.
18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? No.
19. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved? Never.
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? The judge should be patient, courteous and impartial. 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? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? Anger is never appropriate. I want to keep my job, which is a great motivator for keeping my emotions in check. Also, I exercise, walk, work in my yard, and eat properly, 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.

Tanita A. Dunbar

Sworn to before me this 21<sup>st</sup> day of Aug., 2025.

Jan B. Brown

(Signature)

Jan B. Brown

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 1/14/2035