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May 28, 2020

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & FACSIMILE:

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & EMAIL:

Senator John S. Edwards
Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Senate of Virginia
Pocahontas Building, Room E506
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
district21@senate.virginia.gov

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & EMAIL:

Representative Charniele Herring
Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Virginia House of Delegates
Pocahontas Building, Room E606
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
DelCHerring@house.virginia.gov

Re: Vacancy in the 18th Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Alexandria Circuit Court

Dear Governor Northam, Senator Edwards, and Representative Herring:

On behalf of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association ("VWAA"), a regional committee (the "Committee") was impaneled to evaluate candidates for an anticipated vacancy in the 18th Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Alexandria Circuit Court.

The VWAA requested that interested candidates complete the VWAA Judicial Candidates Questionnaire (the "Application"), submit a short biography, and participate in an interview with the Committee. On May 18, 2020, the Committee conducted virtual interviews of four (4) candidates.

It is worth noting that the VWAA ratings are based upon a review of each candidate's merits against published standards and guidelines, including the following: fairness, integrity, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, and *pro bono* service. Ratings are not a function of a general vote by the VWAA membership, nor are they a comparison of candidates within the "pool" presented.

The following rating categories are used by the VWAA:

- (1) NOT QUALIFIED: Applied to any applicant who fails to meet the minimum requirements for fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, integrity and/or other basic criteria set forth in the ABA Guidelines.
- (2) QUALIFIED: Applied to any applicant who meets the minimum requirements for fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, integrity and/or other basic criteria set forth in the ABA Guidelines.
- (3) RECOMMENDED: Applied to any applicant whose qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, integrity and/or other basic criteria set forth in the ABA Guidelines to warrant the Committee's affirmative recommendation.
- (4) HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Reserved for any candidate who is especially well-qualified for the position and merits special recommendation.

The VWAA's procedures provide that ratings of "Qualified" and "Recommended" require a vote in support by at least a simple majority of the Committee. A rating of "Highly Recommended" requires a vote in support by at least a two-thirds majority of those voting. In order for the Committee to find that a candidate fails to meet the minimum qualifications and is "Not Qualified," at least two-thirds of those voting must so find.

The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the VWAA approved, in accordance with its procedures, the following endorsements of the Committee for this judicial vacancy:

Joseph King was found *highly recommended*.
Kathleen Uston was found *highly recommended*.

David Lord was found *recommended*.

Lavonda Graham-Williams was found *qualified*.

Executive summaries of the qualifications of each of the above candidates are attached to this letter.

For your further information, the Committee members participating in the interview process were as follows:

Karrie Dodson: Ms. Dodson is an associate attorney at Maddox & Gerock, working extensively in family law. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2016. Prior to law school, Ms. Dodson worked for 12 years as a paralegal with a family law firm.

Molly Garrett: Ms. Garrett is an attorney with Shoun Bach, where her practice is solely focused on family law, including divorce, child custody and visitation, equitable distribution, spousal support, and child support. Ms. Garrett is an active member of the Alexandria Bar Association. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2003.

Michelle Kaminsky: Ms. Kaminsky is a partner at the law firm of Hite Kaminsky Family Law & Mediation, PLLC. She focuses her practice in the area of domestic relations, including divorce, child custody and visitation, child support, spousal support, and equitable distribution. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2009.

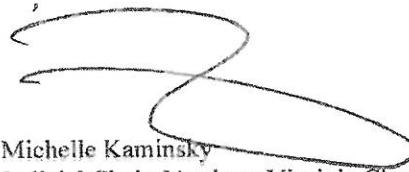
Carole' Krogmann: Ms. Krogmann is a partner at the law firm of Masterman Krogmann, P.C. She focuses her practice in the area of domestic relations, including divorce, child custody and visitation, child support, spousal support, and equitable distribution. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1997.

Lana Manitta: Ms. Manitta is a partner at the law firm of Rich Rosenthal Brincefield Manitta Dzubin & Kroeger, LLP. She focuses her practice in the area of criminal defense. Ms. Manitta also litigates selected family law cases as well as civil matters in the areas of employment law, commercial litigation and insurance coverage. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1998.

Respectfully yours,



Janet Cho
President
Virginia Women Attorneys Association



Michelle Kaminsky
Judicial Chair, Northern Virginia Chapter
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures: Executive Summary of Lavonda Graham-Williams, Esquire
Executive Summary of Joseph King, Esquire
Executive Summary of David Lord, Esquire
Executive Summary of Kathleen Uston, Esquire

CC (by email only): Lavonda Graham-Williams, Esquire
Joseph King, Esquire
David Lord, Esquire
Kathleen Uston, Esquire

CC (by email only): Senator Adam Ebbin
Senator Barbara Favola
Senator David Marsden
Senator George L. Barker
Senator J. Chapman Petersen
Senator Janet D. Howell
Senator Jennifer T. Wexton
Senator Richard L. Saslaw
Senator Scott Surovell
Delegate Alfonso Lopez
Delegate Kathy KL Tran
Delegate Jennifer B. Boysko
Delegate David Bulova
Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn
Delegate Karrie K. Delaney
Delegate Mark H. Levine
Delegate Charniele L. Herring
Delegate Kathleen J. Murphy
Delegate Kenneth R. Plum
Delegate Patrick A. Hope
Delegate Kaye Kory
Delegate Mark D. Sickles
Delegate Mark. L. Keam
Delegate Marcus B. Simon
Delegate Richard C. Sullivan, Jr.
Delegate Timothy D. Hugo
Delegate Vivian E. Watts

CC (by email only): Karrie Dodson, Esquire
Molly Garrett, Esquire
Michelle Kaminsky, Esquire
Carole' Krogmann, Esquire
Lana Manitta, Esquire
Virginia Haizlip, Esquire, VWAA, Northern Virginia Chapter, President

LAVONDA GRAHAM-WILLIAMS

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Graham-Williams earned her Juris Doctor degree from the William & Mary, Marshall Wythe School of Law in 2000 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2000.

Currently, Ms. Graham-Williams is a Senior Assistant Commonwealth Attorney in Prince William County. Prior to joining the Commonwealth Attorney's Office in Prince William County, Ms. Graham-Williams managed her own firm, The Law Offices of Lavonda Graham-Williams, PLLC, in Alexandria, Virginia from 2011 to 2020. Her practice was focused on criminal defense, with a particular focus on special needs defendants and the unique nature of their circumstances as they navigate through the criminal justice system.

During Ms. Graham-Williams' nearly twenty years of practice focused almost exclusively on criminal law cases, she has handled matters across the defense spectrum, including but not limited to domestic assault, child support enforcement, juvenile crimes, narcotics offenses, firearm violations, sex offenses, serious traffic matters, financial crimes, and misdemeanor and felony offenses in both the state and federal court systems. Ms. Graham-Williams has participated in either reduced fee, pro bono and/or court appointed matters in both state and federal courts throughout her career.

Ms. Graham-Williams is a Founding Member of Go, Grow & Be, a community service organization serving special needs communities. In addition, she is an Executive Board Member of the ACLU of Virginia. Ms. Graham-Williams also serves as a member of Northern Virginia Black Attorneys Association, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL), the Virginia State Bar, the Alexandria Bar Association, and Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity International.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions and interview, Ms. Graham-Williams has demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Ms. Graham-Williams possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Graham-Williams meets the minimum requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge based on her limited area of practice. Accordingly, the Committee rates her as **Qualified**.

JOSEPH KING

Experience and Legal Ability: Joseph King earned his Juris Doctor from The University of Michigan Law School in 2003. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2003.

Mr. King has been a partner at his own firm since 2008. His practice is almost exclusively dedicated to criminal defense in state and federal court. Mr. King has also served as a substitute Judge in the District Courts for the City of Alexandria since late 2012. Prior to these positions, Mr. King worked as a public defender in Fredericksburg and Alexandria (2004-2008).

Mr. King has significant ties to Alexandria and has been an active member of Alexandria's legal community. Not only was he a public defender, but he has continued to represent indigent defendants facing the most serious charges in state court and the U.S. District Court, where he is a member of the Criminal Justice Act panel of court-appointed attorneys. He is in his second two-year term as a member of the 4th District Committee with the Alexandria Bar, and he is a regular contributor to CLE presentations and publications.

The committee was satisfied that the combination of Mr. King's legal scholarship, focus on thorough preparation, and work as a substitute Judge for both the General District and Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Courts balances favorably against the fact that he has limited experience as an advocate in the areas of general civil law and domestic relations law.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions, references, and interview, Mr. King has demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Mr. King possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. King is especially well-qualified for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merits the Committee's special recommendation. Accordingly, the Committee rates him as **Highly Recommended**.

DAVID LORD

Experience and Legal Ability: David Lord earned his Juris Doctor from George Mason University's School of Law in 2005. He also earned his Master of Theological Studies from Wesley Theological Seminary in 2019. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2005.

Mr. Lord is the Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Alexandria. Given his position, his practice is focused exclusively on criminal prosecution in state court. Mr. Lord prosecutes major crimes as assigned, which includes sensitive and high-profile cases such as homicides. Mr. Lord is currently responsible for supervising the attorneys who prosecute in the Special Victims Unit.

Mr. Lord is committed and dedicated to the community he serves. He acts as the coordinator for the Alexandria Treatment Court, which operates out of the Circuit Court and seeks to divert individuals with substance use disorders who commit non-violent felony offenses from incarceration. Mr. Lord is also the coordinator of the Conviction Integrity Unit, a new program which examines prior convictions to ensure that the convictions were not compromised by ethical or other problems, that they were rooted in solid evidence, and that any newly discovered post-conviction evidence is considered.

Mr. Lord has also been selected as the lead faculty member of Prosecutor Bootcamp, a week-long training session for prosecutors with under three years of experience, as well as Trauma to Trial, a week-long training program focused on the investigation and prosecution of non-stranger sexual assault. In addition, he regularly teaches CLEs involving prosecutorial ethics, white collar crime, pretrial litigation, working with same-sex victims of sexual violence, and mental health law.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions, references, and interview, Mr. Lord has demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Mr. Lord possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. Lord's qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merits the Committee's recommendation. Accordingly, the Committee rates him as **Recommended**.

KATHLEEN USTON

Experience and Legal Ability: Kathleen Uston earned her Juris Doctor from George Mason University School of Law in 1991. She was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1991.

Ms. Uston has just returned to private practice in Alexandria, opening her own firm, having left her position as Assistant Bar Counsel for the Virginia State Bar, where she had worked since 2007. Her current practice focuses on attorney ethics and civil litigation. In her prior capacity as Assistant Bar Counsel, Ms. Uston prosecuted disciplinary actions against Virginia attorneys for ethical misconduct and handled cases from the investigative stage through trial and disposition. Ms. Uston also currently serves as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the American University Washington College of Law, where she co-teaches Ethics for Trial Lawyers. Prior to these positions, Ms. Uston was a solo practitioner in Alexandria, Virginia with a focus on DUI defense, misdemeanor criminal defense, landlord tenant litigation, personal injury, and general civil litigation for over 15 years.

Ms. Uston has significant ties to Alexandria and has been an active member of Alexandria's legal community. During her time in private practice, Ms. Uston served as a court appointed guardian *ad litem* to the community's children and incapacitated adults and served as Commissioner in Chancery for the Circuit Court of the City of Alexandria. She is an active member of the Alexandria Bar Association, where she has held the position of President as well as other Board and Chair positions. She has received various honors and accolades, including the Don Mela Award for Exemplary Service from the Alexandria Bar Association in 2017 and the Bar Leader of the Year Award from the Virginia State Bar Conference of Local Bar Associations in 2014. In 2013, Ms. Uston began the Jazz4Justice program in Alexandria, proceeds from which help support Legal Services of Northern Virginia's mission of providing low cost or free legal services.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions, references, and interview, Ms. Uston has demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Ms. Uston possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity to serve on the Circuit Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Uston is especially well-qualified for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merits the Committee's special recommendation. Accordingly, the Committee rates her as **Highly Recommended**.