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January 15, 2021

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 20th Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Fauquier
County General District 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 the vacancy in the 20th
Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Fauquier County General District
Court.

The VWAA requested that interested candidates complete the VWAA Judicial Candidates Questionnaire (the "Application") and participate in an interview with the Committee. The Candidates were also allowed to use a Questionnaire submitted to the Fauquier County Bar Association in addition to a portion of the VWAA Questionnaire. On December 21-22, 2020, the Committee interviewed the 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 applicants whose qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements 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 has approved, in accordance with its procedures, the following endorsements of the Committee for these judicial vacancies:

Allison Coppage is found *highly recommended*.

David Dischley is found *recommended*.

Victoria C. Dronsick is found *qualified*.
Jessica Foster is 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:

Leslie Barnes: Ms. Barnes is a Senior Assistant County Attorney for Loudoun County. Ms. Barnes received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration from Truman State University, her Master of Business Administration degree in International Business from Schiller University in Germany and her Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Maryland School of Law. Her practice focuses on the representation of the Department of Family Services and the Loudoun County Public Library. She is admitted to practice law in Washington, D.C., Texas, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Virginia. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2009.

Kristen Byers: Ms. Byers is a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Coast Guard Reserve. Prior to becoming a reserve officer in 2019, she served on active duty for 14 years with five years as a Judge Advocate General. Her practice areas include military justice, international maritime law, and disability law. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2012.

Amy Harber: Ms. Harber is a Senior Attorney with Allstate Insurance Company's Fairfax, Virginia office, where she focuses on insurance subrogation and bodily injury defense. Prior to joining Allstate in 2020, she served as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in the City of Hampton and Loudoun County for a combined total of 12 years. She graduated from the University of Richmond with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Criminal Justice in 2004. She worked full time in the Victim/Witness Program with the Spotsylvania Commonwealth's Attorney's Office after college and participated in the night student program at George Mason University School of Law, graduating in December 2007. Ms. Harber is admitted to practice in Virginia and has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2008.

Marie Johnson: Ms. Johnson is a partner with JPS Law, PLLC in Vienna, Virginia. She graduated from the University of Virginia with a Bachelor of Arts in Government in 2003 and received her law degree from Capital University Law School in 2006. Ms. Johnson practices real property, business, collections/creditor's rights, civil/commercial litigation, and community association law. Ms. Johnson is admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia. Ms. Johnson has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2006.


Rachel Robinson: Ms. Robinson is an Associate Attorney with the Law Offices of Alex Levay, PLLC, in Leesburg, Virginia. Before joining the firm, she was a Senior Assistant Public Defender in Loudoun County. Ms. Robinson graduated from Baylor University and Pepperdine University School of Law. Her practice consists mostly of criminal defense work and some family law. Ms. Robinson also serves her community as a Guardian *ad litem* for children and on the boards of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association and the Loudoun County Bar Association. Ms. Robinson has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2014.

Two original members of the Committee (not listed here) were unavailable for all of the interviews so they were removed from the Committee and did not participate in the final evaluation of any candidate.

We hope that this information will prove helpful to you during your selection process for this very important judicial position.

Respectfully yours,


Margaret Hardy
President
Virginia Women Attorneys Association


Rachel Robinson
Chair, Loudoun Judicial Evaluation Committee
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures: Executive Summary of Allison Coppage
 Executive Summary of David Dischley
 Executive Summary of Victoria C. Dronsick
 Executive Summary of Jessica Foster

CC (by email only): Allison Coppage
 David Dischley
 Victoria C. Dronsick
 Jessica Foster

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 B. Boysko
 Senator Richard L. Saslaw
 Senator Scott Surovell
 Delegate Alfonso Lopez
 Delegate Kathy KL Tran
 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 Daniel I. Helner
Delegate Vivian E. Watts

CC (by email only): Leslie Barnes
Kristen Byers
Amy Harber
Marie Johnson
Rachel Robinson

ALLISON COPPAGE

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Coppage received her Juris Doctor degree from Capital University Law School in 1999. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1994. Ms. Coppage has been litigating for more than 21 years. She is a litigation attorney with an emphasis on family practice, including support, custody, visitation, adoption, divorce, equitable distribution and juvenile proceedings. She has served as a Guardian *ad litem* since 2001 in all courts in the 20th Circuit.

Ms. Coppage has substantial trial experience. She has litigated cases in the Circuit Court, General District Court, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court throughout the Commonwealth. Specifically, she has represented the Fauquier County Department of Social Services and has served as court appointed counsel for Department of Social Services cases. She also has appellate experience before the Court of Appeals of Virginia.

In addition to her litigation experience, Ms. Coppage has served her community as Vice President of the Rappahannock Legal Services board and is a member of the Fauquier County Bar Association (Juvenile Court Liaison Committee and Judicial Selection Committee).

Ms. Coppage has served as a substitute judge for more than three years, sitting in both Juvenile and Domestic Relations and General District Courts in the 20th Circuit, as well as in Culpepper and Shenandoah. A resident of Fauquier County for over 16 years, Ms. Coppage has a wealth of knowledge regarding the needs and priorities of the community. She has clear and tangible ideas for improving the 20th District docket. Her breadth of knowledge both inside and outside of the courtroom make her an especially well-qualified candidate for the position of General District Court judge for the 20th District of Virginia.

Fairness and Temperament: Ms. Coppage demonstrated to the Committee, through her interview and written materials, that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament of a General District Court judge. Ms. Coppage exhibited diligence and seems to possess a unique love of learning and open-mindedness, as well as tact, firmness, understanding, and compassion.

Professionalism and Integrity: Through her written materials and interview demeanor, the Committee finds that Ms. Coppage has the essential professionalism and integrity required for a General District Court judge. More specifically, she was able to speak truth without exaggeration and the Committee found her to be honest and willing to take measures to prevent and combat bias in the courtroom.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Coppage is especially well-qualified for the position of General District Court judge for the 20th District of Virginia. Gaining additional training in diversity, racial bias, and inclusion will benefit Ms. Coppage and all of the candidates. The Committee has no hesitation in its special recommendation and rating of **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

DAVID DISCHLEY

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Dischley received his Juris Doctor degree from Antonin Scalia Law School in 2006. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Administration of Justice from George Mason University in 2003. Mr. Dischley was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2006. He was also admitted to practice before the United States District Court of the Eastern District of Virginia in 2009 and the Western District of Virginia in 2011.

In 2013, Mr. Dischley started his own law firm, The Law Office of David J. Dischley, PLC in Warrenton, Virginia. He brought on associates and converted that firm into Dischley Law PLLC in 2017. In this practice, he primarily focuses on criminal defense, business formation, contract disputes, and landlord-tenant actions. He maintains offices in Fairfax, Manassas, and Alexandria and practices in all jurisdictions throughout northern Virginia, including Fauquier. He also represents pro bono clients and takes a special interest in cases involving veterans, substance abuse, mental health, and other special needs populations.

Mr. Dischley briefly worked for the federal government from 2007 to 2008 and is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. Prior to starting his firm, Mr. Dischley worked at the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office from 2006 to 2007, the Fauquier County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office from 2008 to 2009, and the Bose Law Firm in Springfield, Virginia from 2009 to 2013. He practiced primarily criminal law in those positions. Throughout his career, he has been a member of the Fauquier, Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun Bar Associations, the National Trial Lawyers Association, and the National College of DWI Defense.

Mr. Dischley served as the Legal Advisor to the Warrenton Town Police from 2009 to 2018 and previously served as a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) presenter on Cybersecurity. He is a member of The Bridge Community Church and board member of the Cause Fur Paws organization. He resides in Warrenton with his family.

Fairness and Temperament: Mr. Dischley demonstrated to the Committee through his submissions and interview that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: Mr. Dischley demonstrated to the Committee through his submissions and interview that he possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. Dischley's qualifications exceed the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court judge. Gaining additional training in diversity, racial bias, and inclusion will benefit Mr. Dischley and all of the candidates. He warrants the Committee's rating of **RECOMMENDED**.

VICTORIA C. DRONSICK

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Dronsick received her Juris Doctor from Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center in 2003. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies from Syracuse University in 2000. Ms. Dronsick was admitted to practice law in the State of Florida in 2004 and in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2017.

Since 2016, Ms. Dronsick has been a Certified Magistrate/Attorney for the 20th Judicial District, serving the areas of Warrenton, Leesburg, Rappahannock, Luray, Woodstock, Charlottesville, Orange, Culpeper, Harrisonburg, and Winchester, Virginia. Prior to serving as a Certified Magistrate/Attorney, she was an attorney and commercial property manager for Property Management Company in Fauquier, Virginia and Sanibel, Florida. Ms. Dronsick had her own solo-practice handling real estate transactions, landlord-tenant actions and criminal law defense in Delray Beach, Florida from 2005 to 2009. Ms. Dronsick also served from 2002 to 2005 as an Assistant State Attorney for the 15th Judicial Circuit in West Palm Beach, Florida. While in law school, Ms. Dronsick was a bankruptcy law clerk for the law firm of Dzikowski & Walsh and had an internship with the Federal Public Defender's Office in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Ms. Dronsick serves as a substitute teacher and parent volunteer/chaperone for the Fauquier County Public Schools. She volunteers in the Marshall Middle School 7th Grade Civics classes concerning the Magistrate office and judicial system. She has also volunteered for the Dynamic Life Ministries, Marshall Middle School Baseball Team, Fauquier High School Boys Tennis Team, Skyline Criminal Justice Academy, and the Central Shenandoah Criminal Justice Training Academy. Ms. Dronsick is a member of the Virginia Magistrate Association and is a Certified Magistrate Trainer.

As a Certified Magistrate/Attorney, Ms. Dronsick is not currently engaged in the practice of law, pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-37(F). In her capacity as Certified Magistrate/Attorney, Ms. Dronsick currently is responsible for conducting bail hearings and issuing warrants, summonses, protective orders, search warrants, mental health orders such as Emergency Custody Orders and Temporary Detention Orders. She also completes bail checklists. From 2009 to 2014, Ms. Dronsick appeared in the Fauquier General District Court as a practicing attorney handling disputed tenancy proceedings, unlawful detainers, and garnishments.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions and interview, Ms. Dronsick has demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Ms. Dronsick possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Dronsick's qualifications meet the requirements for the position of a General District Court judge. Gaining additional training in diversity, racial bias, and inclusion will benefit Ms. Dronsick and all of the candidates. Gaining additional experience as a practicing attorney representing clients in the Commonwealth's courts would benefit Ms. Dronsick. She warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

JESSICA FOSTER

Experience and Legal Ability: Jessica Harbeson Foster earned her Juris Doctor degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in 2009 after receiving her Bachelor of Science degree from George Mason University in 2006. Ms. Foster was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2009.

Ms. Foster began her legal career as an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney in the Frederick County Commonwealth Attorney's Office. In 2010, she became an associate at the law firm of Olmstead & Olmstead where she practiced mainly in the areas of criminal law and domestic relations. In 2015, Ms. Foster founded J.H. Foster Law, PLLC in Manassas, Virginia. Also in 2015, Ms. Foster added handling Special Immigrant Juvenile Status matters to her areas of practice. In 2016, Ms. Foster became a founding partner at Foster McCollam, PLLC. In 2019, Ms. Foster became a founding partner at Foster McCollam Wright, PLLC which is also located in Manassas, Virginia.

Ms. Foster has appeared in the courts of Prince William County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Warren County, Stafford County, Fauquier County, Spotsylvania County, Culpeper County, the City of Alexandria and the City of Fredericksburg.

Ms. Foster is qualified by the Virginia Indigent Defense Commission to accept court-appointed indigent representation for misdemeanor, felony and juvenile delinquency cases. She has been qualified to accept court-appointed representation for misdemeanor and juvenile delinquency cases since 2010 and for felony cases since 2013. She has handled over 1,500 court-appointed criminal cases. Ms. Foster was also qualified by the Supreme Court of Virginia to represent children as a Guardian *ad litem* from 2010 to 2018.

Within the legal community, Ms. Foster has been a member of the Prince William County Bar Association since 2010 and currently serves as one of its Directors. She has been a member of the Prince William County Bar Foundation since 2016 and currently serves on its Beat the Odds Committee.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions, interview, and professional references, Ms. Foster has demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the General District Court bench.

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

Overall Evaluation: While Ms. Foster's indigent criminal defense practice is to be lauded, the Committee believes that Ms. Foster may benefit from shadowing colleagues in non-domestic relations related civil cases and/or serving as a substitute judge. Gaining additional training in diversity, racial bias, and inclusion will benefit Ms. Foster and all of the candidates. The Committee finds that Ms. Foster meets the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court judge. Accordingly, the Committee rates her as **QUALIFIED**.