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March 11, 2026

Chairman Jason M. Nemes
Kentucky House of Representatives
2026 Impeachment Committee
702 Capitol Avenue, Room 307
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Re: Judge Julie Muth Goodman

Dear Chairman Nemes,

I am writing this letter in response to a request for information in this committee's investigation into the Petition for Impeachment filed against Judge Julie Goodman. I recognize that our system of government is founded on elections that allow the citizens of Fayette County to choose their candidate. I also acknowledge that the bar to impeach a sitting official is high and it should be. Thus, it is very rare that a sitting judge has been impeached in Kentucky. However, oftentimes the public does not encounter certain officials regularly and is therefore unaware of how they actually perform their duties. Sometimes a person's resume does not truly indicate that they are a good candidate for a particular position. In this case, unless a person has experience with the court system, or follows the actions of the judiciary, the public may not be able to understand and assess how Judge Goodman performs her duties or interacts with parties who come before her. If a judge's systemic and pervasive actions and behavior undermine the justice process to such an extent that either party or the public is prejudiced by their obvious bias, then the fairness of any

proceeding before them is impaired and brings the judiciary into disrepute. In those cases, impeachment is a proper recourse. Judge Goodman's actions should not be looked at in isolation or based on the cases that were presented in the petition. Rather, I am asking this committee to review all of Judge Goodman's actions, comments, and rulings, as well as the bias against my office that permeates her decisions.

I am the Fayette Commonwealth's Attorney, appointed by Governor Beshear in 2022. I was born and raised in Lexington, graduated from the University of Kentucky and the University of Kentucky College of Law. I began as an intern under Ray Larson in January 1996 and never left the office, earning my Juris Doctor in May 1996. Upon Mr. Larson's retirement in 2016, I became the First Assistant under Lou Anna Red Corn and remained in that position until my appointment.

Judge Goodman was elected to the Fayette Circuit Court bench in November 2019. I met her briefly in 2008 when we both ran for the Fayette District Court judicial vacancy. At that time, our conversations were pleasant and friendly. During her time on the District Court bench, I had heard many stories about her temperament and treatment of the county attorneys who practiced before her. Therefore, before she began her term in Circuit Court, I was apprehensive of how she would treat the prosecutors in the office. It was not very long before Judge Goodman began to publicly make derogatory comments towards my office regarding the handling of our cases, specifically accusing us of overcharging defendants, giving her opinions pretrial regarding the merits of a case and chastising us on how we proceed with and resolve cases.

In her written response to the committee, she claims that her orders are based on sound legal principles. However, she does not acknowledge any error on her part for her actions in those rulings. Recognizing such would demonstrate that she understands the misapplication of the law

and a willingness to study cases in order to make proper rulings. However, she defends her actions, even when she has been reversed and given an explanation as to her errors.

In *Commonwealth v. Cornell Thomas*, she claims that she followed established procedure and applied the law to the facts in evidence when dismissing the indictment. However, looking at the record as a whole, that is clearly incorrect. Judge Goodman ignored well established law that summary judgment cannot be employed in criminal cases as the Commonwealth is entitled to present its cases to a jury. There are only very extreme circumstances in which the law allows her to make the Commonwealth prove its case to her pretrial for her to decide whether or not we are permitted to proceed to trial. But that's what she did in this case. She was convinced that the defendant had been wrongly charged, that his actions amounted to just a traffic accident, and therefore demanded my prosecutors prove to her how we intended to convict him at trial. Despite Dr. Allen's testimony and expert opinion as to the cause of the defendant's mental state, based on his 30 years of experience, (most likely substance abuse induced as symptoms of mental illness do not manifest itself for a short period of time as the defendant and his family described), she chose to agree with part (that there was a psychotic break) but disagree with his opinion as to the cause. She then shifted the burden to us to prove he was sane, rather than the correct burden being on the defendant to prove he was not. Regardless, it is well established law that the jury determines the weight to give to Dr. Allen's testimony and they decide whether to believe the defendant had a psychotic break, whether or not it was substance abuse induced, and whether that rendered him incapable of conforming his actions to the law. Yet she chose to take the fact-finding responsibility away from the jury and conduct her own "bench trial", making rulings as a matter of law.

Moreover, she ignored the fact that the crime of Wanton Murder *does not* require an element of intoxication when she focused her questioning on that aspect as the basis to dismiss the

case. Criminal Rule 5.10 states that no indictment shall be quashed or judgment of conviction reversed on the ground that there was not sufficient evidence before the grand jury to support the indictment. However, she decided to research ways in which she could dismiss the case anyway. She informed the parties that she could dismiss the case if there was prosecutorial misconduct and then, on her own accord, looked for any irregularities in the presentation of the case to the grand jury.

She determined there was misconduct for not presenting exculpatory evidence to the grand jury or clarifying statements made by the investigator and determined there was sufficient evidence of prosecutorial misconduct in order to dismiss the indictment. She then decided, again on her own, to find yet another reason to justify dismissing the indictment, again not an argument brought up by the defendant. She became her own witness and stated her belief that my office engages in selective prosecution and discriminatory practices and used unvetted and out of context statistics from the Department of Public Advocacy to confirm her long-held belief regarding how the Commonwealth Attorney's office operates. As further proof in her mind of selective prosecution, she mentioned *one* other case in her division where the defendant was white and was charged with Manslaughter Second Degree. There were no sound legal principles or case law that supported what she wrote in her opinion. There was no mention of other cases pending in her division where white defendants were charged with Murder or African American defendants were charged with Manslaughter Second Degree. She did not discuss the facts of those cases to distinguish them from each other. The Court of Appeals opinion reversing her decision was *108 pages of a very detailed discussion about how she had misinterpreted the law and multiple times questioning how she could not understand very basic legal principles.*

“The trial court abused and exceeded its authority. Under the mere guise of supervisory authority, with no prompting by the parties, and disregarding the separation of powers, the

trial court rejected the grand jury's independent decision to indict and encroached upon the prosecutor's duty to carry out a core Executive Branch function to prosecute that indictment. ***In doing so, the court abused its power in a way that reflects poorly on the judiciary as a whole.***"

"That supports our belief that the trial court failed to read closely enough to understand its holding but, instead, plucked out-of-context snippets supporting its desired outcome."

"In support of its own allegations of selective prosecution, the trial court effectively testified that "in its 15-year tenure on the bench[, it] has noted a clear pattern of disparate charging decisions by the Commonwealth in which white defendants are charged with lesser offenses and given better offers than defendants of color." (TR 223). The court continued testifying that it was aware of "one other case in which a white defendant . . . was charged by the Commonwealth with only Second-Degree Manslaughter" while choosing "to take a black male [Appellee] . . . and charge him with Murder . . ." (TR 222-23). ***The trial judge appears unaware of a rule of evidence prohibiting her own testimony***".

"It is difficult to believe that a trial court aware of this jurisprudence would even imagine it appropriate or permissible to pursue a selective prosecution claim sua sponte. In fact, we found sua sponte pursuit of that claim unique among all the American jurisprudence we surveyed. Absent any reasonable explanation, it would appear the trial court embraces an animus of unknown origin toward the Fayette Commonwealth's Attorney."

Citing *Alred v. Commonwealth, Judicial Conduct Commission*, our Supreme Court explained: The judge in *Alred* conducted an extrajudicial investigation to discover incriminating information about a party in litigation before him. . . ."In *Alred*, the adversely affected party was the defendant; in this case, that party is the Commonwealth which is no less entitled to the same protections against such improper judicial conduct. The trial judge effectively admitted in her order dismissing that she had researched the question of the cause of Appellee's mental illness, researched the independent grand jury proceedings, and researched the history of the prosecutor's charging decisions, all of which she did independently and extrajudicially".

While she claims that judges regularly rule on motions to dismiss filed by attorneys, dismissing an indictment is an extremely rare circumstance with very clear case law about when that can occur. But in this case, she did not just rule on the basis given by the defense attorney, the defendant's mental state, she decided to add reasons not raised or argued by them, amounting to "judicial ambush".

Despite her assertion that she does not speak publicly, only in court and in her rulings (which are indeed public), she has put into the record her long-standing issues with our office and how we prosecute cases. She equates her disagreement with the resolution of cases with unethical behavior or prosecutorial misconduct. Before making such allegations in open court, she does not evaluate the discussions we have had with defense counsel, the circumstances of the defendant, or the discussions with victims. She has never contacted me, as the Commonwealth's Attorney, about any concerns. Rather, they manifest themselves into rude and degrading comments made from the bench. That is not the behavior that the general public should expect from a judge on the Circuit Court bench. Now, more than ever, there can be absolutely no confidence in her ability to be fair to the Commonwealth in her rulings in our cases.

She also discusses her ruling in *Commonwealth v. Domonick Jones*. Her written response mentions multiple times that the Commonwealth "did not object" to her sentence of probation for an individual who was ineligible based on the statute. The fact that she is highlighting this numerous times is indicative of her belief that my office is responsible for everything that occurs in court. The defendant's attorney should have informed him he was not eligible for probation. If she did not, that was a failure on her part and could constitute ineffective assistance of counsel. If she did know, her failing to inform the Court would seem to be dishonest as an officer of the Court. As a judge on the bench for 15 years, sentencing many drug traffickers, Judge Goodman should have been aware that he was not eligible either. But what she leaves out of her response is that, when my office filed a Motion for Resentencing when the Drug Court Judge informed the parties he was not eligible, Judge Goodman did not acknowledge the mistake and enter a corrected order. Rather she followed the request of the defendant's attorney to enter the order retroactively (she had not entered the order at that point). She stated on the record that she could

enter the order, but the case would come back when it was reversed on appeal. But she specifically ignored the law and entered the order anyway. She does not explain her basis for doing so. The Court of Appeals has since ruled on the appeal, vacating and remanding the case for a proper sentencing hearing.

In *Commonwealth v. Hendron*, the Court of Appeals reversed Judge Goodman's order granting the defense's Motion for a New Trial and Judgment of Acquittal Notwithstanding the Verdict, stating "the circuit court not only ignored the law on this matter but also impermissibly encroached on the province of the jury as finder of fact when she engaged in an independent review of the case in contravention of our jury system". That case is pending discretionary review before the Kentucky Supreme Court. The other cases included in the Petition (except Simpson) involve civil matters not handled by this office. I will not comment on her responses to those cases at this time.

After she entered her order in *Thomas*, I filed a Motion to Recuse requesting that she remove herself from a murder case (*Commonwealth v. Darryl Russell*) that was set for trial shortly thereafter, based on comments she had made about the victim's mother in the case during a bond hearing and her comments in the *Thomas* order. This was the first of a few Motions to Recuse that I filed. The *Russell* case involved a domestic violence situation where the defendant repeatedly abused the victim's mother. On one occasion prior to the murder, the defendant shot at the victim's brother when he attempted to intervene and protect his mother from abuse. In the instant that led to the charges being filed against the defendant, the victim was also protecting his mother from the abuse. Shortly after, the defendant shot and killed the victim, claiming self-defense when a gun was found near where the victim lay. During a bond hearing, when the Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney was arguing against a reduction to his bond, Judge Goodman interjected and said "she

let her children stay in the situation, she chose to stay in the situation”, while the mother was sitting in the courtroom. There is not a context in which blaming a domestic violence victim for staying in an abusive relationship that led to the death of her son is ever an appropriate comment.

During the recusal hearing, I pointed out multiple times where she made disparaging comments expressing her opinion about how my office resolves cases. Rather than listening to my concerns about what she says, and providing solutions on how to move forward, she chose to counter my statements, deny any wrongdoing, and failed to acknowledge how her comments affect the reputation of my office. It was in that hearing where I said her public words carry weight as a judge, and she stated she speaks through her opinions and in court, she does not talk to the public.

In her written response, Judge Goodman alleges that the Commonwealth has avenues in which to seek redress for rulings that we believe are correct. However, those avenues are limited. If we believe that she has made an incorrect evidentiary ruling, the Commonwealth can appeal some of those decisions to the Court of Appeals. However, if she makes incorrect rulings during trial, unlike the defendant, the Commonwealth cannot appeal those rulings to allow a retrial. If her rulings are not based on the law, rather her personal opinions as to how we are trying the case, then we are prejudiced in the presentation of our case, which leads to an unfair outcome to victims and does a disservice to the public. We filed Motions to Recuse initially with her after the *Thomas* opinion, (written and verbally), yet she refused to recuse from those cases. We filed two of the Motions with the Chief Justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court. They did not rule on the merits of the claims, one indicating it would not be proper to rule since I had referenced the *Thomas* case while it was on appeal. The other response indicating I had not filed the motion timely after a defendant withdrew his attempts at a guilty plea. In that case, she told the prosecutor the financial case was a civil case and not a criminal case, and berated the prosecutor for presenting a charged

case to the grand jury rather than telling the crime victims to “fight it out with their civil attorneys” because we have murders, rapes, and burglaries to deal with. Our office has filed appeal to the Court of Appeals through the Attorney General. We have filed Motions to Recuse with her and to the Kentucky Supreme Court. Our efforts to seek recourse for her behavior towards us based on her words and rulings have been to no avail.

In researching our case management record system, I reviewed the approximate number of hearings conducted on a defendant’s Motion to Suppress and the result of those rulings made by our Circuit Court judges. Since December 1, 2019 when Judge Goodman took the Circuit Court bench, the disparate results were not surprising.

Judge	# of Hearings Held	# Overruled/Denied (in favor of the Commonwealth)	# Sustained (in favor of the defendant)	Defendant’s suppression success rate
Goodman	30	6	24	80%
Travis	41	36	5	12%
Minnifield/Taylor/Scorsone	41	28	13	32%
Bunnell	38	31	7	18%
VanMeter	32	28	4	12.5%

The Commonwealth has appealed a number of those cases, many of which were reversed for her failing to adequately apply the law to the facts of the cases. So, either she does not correctly research cases and is not competent to adjudicate them, or she chooses to interpret them in a way that she can rule against the Commonwealth.

In addition, I have included in this letter transcripts of interactions Judge Goodman has had with the office. I have included the full transcript so that she cannot say the comments were skewed or taken out of context. I ask that you read through those transcripts to get a more complete picture

as to her demeanor in court, her lack of understanding of the law and her role in the system, and her clear bias towards my office. The quotes from the cases are too numerous to name in this letter alone and I have not included every transcript containing examples of her tone and demeanor towards us.

Judge Goodman's rude and disrespectful comments towards me and my office, adverse rulings and the Court of Appeals reversals highlight her misunderstanding and misapplication of the law. Her very public allegations that she believes over her 15 year tenure on the bench, the Office of the Fayette Commonwealth's Attorney (and specifically this Commonwealth's Attorney) engages in discriminatory charging decisions and selective prosecution shows such a bias that absolutely no confidence can be given that the rulings she makes are grounded in the law, rather her clear bias towards my office. Because of her comments and prevalent adverse rulings, my office has to have very different conversations with victims in the cases that are in her court. We have to prepare them for insensitive comments she will make to the prosecutors and to victims themselves. We extend plea offers differently in her division as well and participate in mediations to avoid jury trials and minimize the decisions she must make in a case as she unjustly impacts case outcomes. When she imposes her own biased thoughts on a case, victims continue to be traumatized, the judicial system does not operate as it should, and the public trust suffers.

"A judge shall perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice. A judge shall not, in the performance of judicial duties, by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice..." SCR 4.300, Canon 3(B)(5). This means:

A judge must perform judicial duties impartially and fairly. A judge who manifests bias on any basis in a proceeding impairs the fairness of the proceeding and brings the judiciary into disrepute. Facial expression and body language, in addition to oral communication, can give parties or lawyers in the proceeding, jurors, the media and others an appearance of judicial bias. A judge must be alert to avoid behavior that may be perceived as prejudicial.

SCR 4.300, Canon 3(B)(5), Commentary.

One of the critical purposes in these rules is “to promote public confidence in the integrity of the judicial process.” *Liljeberg v. Health Services Acq. Corp.*, 486 U.S. 847, 859-60 (1988). The goal is to “avoid even the appearance of partiality.” *Id.* At 860. The inquiry “is an objective one, made from the perspective of a reasonable observer who is informed of all the surrounding facts and circumstances.” *Dean v. Bondurant*, 193 S.W.3d 744, 746 (Ky. 2006) (quoting *Microsoft Corp. v. United States*, 530 U.S. 1301 (2000)).

In review of Judge Goodman’s behavior on the bench, there is a true appearance of partiality, and no public confidence in the integrity of the judicial process, for this office or any victims that come before her. That trust and confidence cannot be restored. Therefore, I am requesting that the appropriate decision be made, to impeach Judge Goodman.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly H. Baird
Commonwealth’s Attorney