



Laura L. Wheale
Chief Juvenile Court Judge
Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit
100 Prior Street, #202
Cedartown, Georgia 30125

February 7, 2022

Via Hand Delivery and Email

Chief Judge Meng Lim
Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Superior Court

RE: Juvenile Court Judge Resignation

Dear Judge Lim:

Please accept this letter as my resignation as Juvenile Court Judge of the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit. I intend to step down March 8, 2022 - three years from the beginning of my term and one year short of its completion. Thank you for appointing me to serve as Juvenile Court Judge.

As you know, I have pending litigation against the Counties in an attempt to protect the integrity, independence, and functionality of the Court due to dramatic changes that were implemented immediately after my appointment. Specifically, I was treated differently from my male predecessor by being denied the necessary office, salary, budget, staff, files and equipment to efficiently run the court. To protect against the appearance of impropriety or personal interest, I publicly pledged, in writing, at the inception of these claims nearly three years ago to donate any and all proceeds from this litigation to fund scholarships to foster children. I took an oath of office when I was appointed, and I have tried to honor that oath through these efforts.

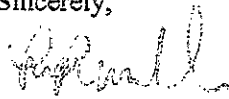
I've tried my best to ferry this Court and the selfless staff members who were willing to work with me during the Covid pandemic. I also have tried to live up to my commitment to the community, but I feel the refusal of the Counties to treat me – and by extension, this Court and staff – equally does a disservice to the interests of this Court and the families of this community at an unjustified cost to me, personally, and to my family. For these reasons I have decided it would be best to step away.

Briefly, I would like to highlight how much has been accomplished to restore the dignity of the Juvenile Court. During the past three years, the large backlog of cases has been cleared; the seeds for family treatment court were planted and blossomed to become a model court for the entire State of Georgia; “rubber stamping” of indigent counsel timesheets was eliminated, injecting much needed accountability; improper ex-parte communications has not been tolerated; and more importantly, the families and children are being given full and fair due process.

To give credit where credit is due, these successes were not the result of any Herculean efforts on my part. Instead, it was the culmination of efforts from the people who work in, with, and around the Court, determined to see families succeed. Everyone in Juvenile Court has worked tirelessly and selflessly, shouldering more responsibility than is fair to expect from them. The Tallapoosa Circuit is lucky to have silent leaders like those involved with the Juvenile Court – leaders who receive no fanfare because they operate largely under the shadow of confidentiality and thus, cannot advertise these daily successes.

It has been my honor to serve the families of our community over the past three years – a community that molded me and to whom I want to serve. Again, thank you. If I can be of any assistance during the transition, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura L. Wheale".

Judge Laura L. Wheale