

Testimony in Support of Leo V. Diana's Nomination to be a Judge of the Superior Court Judiciary Committee Public Hearing on April 11, 2014. Testimony of Cheri Ann Pelletier, Manchester, Connecticut

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Attorney Leo V. Diana's nomination to be a judge of the Superior Court.

My first encounter with Attorney Leo Diana was in May of 2000 when I was hired by him to act as a social services consultant for one of his client's who was facing a complex divorce case complicated by the presence of mental health issues and a parallel federal criminal case involving parental kidnapping. My services were provided on call and my duties entailed ensuring that his client was present at all required court hearings, coordinating mental health counseling and facilitating crisis intervention and outreach support. I was retained to assist his client's behavioral needs as her legal issues were being litigated. Hiring a consultant to ensure that his client's well being and the well-being of her children during visitations and beyond, was a fairly new concept in 2000 and speaks highly to Attorney Diana's sensitivity to the behavior of his client and his respect for the understanding that the stress of severe change in the life of a highly functioning mentally impaired individual can lead to unstable and sometimes erratic behaviors resulting in them being a possible threat to themselves and/or those around them. It was a decisive move on his part as his client proved to possess such suicidal tendencies while facing a pending divorce, homelessness and the custodial loss of two children.

Throughout the course of my employment, Attorney Diana checked in daily to his client's progress and provided whatever services were necessary to ensure his client's personal needs were being fully addressed. It is worth noting that Attorney Diana continued to pay for my services after the legal cases were resolved to aid in assisting the transition period for his legal client. There is no doubt in my mind, based on my professional experiences that the compassion that Attorney Diana displayed toward his client and her children was a proactive approach that many in his profession would consider out of the realm of legal practice, but his actions not only saved her life but allowed her the opportunity to rebuild her life and to achieve a healthy and sustainable relationship with her children.

My path with Leo Diana would not cross again until November of 2009 when we were both elected to serve the Manchester Board of Directors. Leo would be elected as Mayor and this time, I served on the other side as Minority Leader. In the five years now that I have served under his leadership, I have grown to appreciate his sense of humor (always present) and his ability to keep under control when dealing with my demands and those of our community. As we navigate the process of creating public

policy together, I have witnessed his independence of mind and moral courage on several occasions, being prepared to take and maintain unpopular decisions when necessary, and always displaying dignity not arrogance. He is keenly aware of the likely reaction of our community and the media when addressing our board agenda and items, but I have never seen him swayed by it. It goes without saying to anyone who has ever had the privilege of working with him that his patience and ability to listen is second to none. In our community, he is clearly credited with creating a bi-partisan atmosphere in a very politically charged environment; I know, because I am often his biggest political hurdle. By consistently being courteous and considerate of differing opinions and willing to exercise sound temperament, he has successfully passed bi-partisan budgets during his terms of service often with unanimous consent. His commitment and willingness to serve the long hours required in his role as Mayor mirrors the same level of commitment he delivers to his extensive volunteer activities and his own family's active lifestyle.

My professional and volunteer experiences over the years with Attorney Leo Diana convinces me that he displays a high level of the skills and attributes desirable in a Superior Court Judge complimented by his extensive experience of litigation and familiarity with the courts. I would urge your Committee to approve Attorney Diana's appointment as a Judge of the Superior Court.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cheri Ann Pelletier