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**TESTIMONY of MAUREEN M. MARTOWSKA
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April 10, 2015**

TO: Judiciary Committee

RE: Opposition to the Reappointment of Chief Justice Chase Rogers

Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I oppose the reappointment of Chief Justice Chase Rogers for her failure to provide the proper guidance, direction, oversight, and leadership of the CT Family Court system and most importantly for obtaining the accountability so needed in family courts throughout this state.

I am a 62-year old grandmother whose granddaughter has been denied access to her paternal family for well over 2 years, at a cost of over \$350,000 for legal fees, GAL fees, supervised visitation for a year, couples therapy, child therapy, and other services. These are unending costs to already fragile families going through crisis in their lives. For my family, this has been a 10-year ordeal.

The problems with the Family Court system have been known for a few years now. "Disgruntled" has been a word bantered by many in the legal industry to persuade you that one parent is typically a loser and one a winner with the outcome of any one court decision. However, when trying to understand why parents are disgruntled, rarely do we make the deep introspection needed, not the superficial one.

Chief Justice Rogers talks about the importance of Access to Justice. In light of the "disgruntled" parent, let's review what that access looks like:

- Parents find themselves unable to access children due to unnecessary, expensive and prolonged supervised visitation of 4, 6, or 12 months or more.
- Parents are prohibited from billing court-ordered therapy under their insurance company.
- Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) are granted unfettered ability to introduce hearsay -- evidence that is untrustworthy and unreliable by most evidentiary standards.

- GALs are allowed to offer recommendations on medical diagnosis, conditions, and treatments – even though they are not experts in the field and are unlicensed as behavioral health professionals (. . . and in our case one that ignored the recommendations from a psych evaluation that cost thousands of dollars by greatly elongating the transition visitation schedule, eliminating all holiday visitation, and never returning to the original parenting plan as previously approved by the court and proposed by the psych evaluator without having to have another lengthy trial).
- GALs are granted immunity even where perjury, fraud, or other malfeasance exist with no accountability or consequence.
- Parents are court-ordered to raid their children’s college education funds, their 401k retirement accounts, and even foreclose upon their homes to pay court-ordered fees.
- Parents are jailed for their inability to pay limitless fees imposed upon them by the family court for GALs, therapists, psych evaluations, and supervised visitations --- in particular making indigent parents more vulnerable to such actions.

IS IT ANY WONDER OVER 80% OF FAMILY COURT LITIGANTS ARE PRO SE?

IS IT ANY WONDER ANY OF THESE PARENTS ARE “DISGRUNTLED” WHEN THEY ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE ON THE EQUIVALENT OF ONE OR TWO ADDITIONAL MORTGAGES TO SUPPORT THE THRIVING AND VORACIOUS APPETITE OF THE DIVORCE INDUSTRY?

There has been insufficient improvement in the Family Court with Chief Justice Rogers at the helm the past 8 years. The children and families in this state shouldn’t be forced to bear another 8 years of the same. It’s time to give someone who recognizes the current issues with the court system and wants to make significant improvements a chance to do so. The status quo is unacceptable.

Maureen M. Martowska

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