CHAIRPERSON: Representative Steven Stafstrom

SENATORS: Bergstein, Haskell, Kissel, Lesser, Winfield, Sampson

REPRESENTATIVES: Concepcion, Conley, Champagne, Cummings, Currey, Dillon, Dubitsky, Fox, Godfrey, Harding, Hill, Horn, Labriola, McGorty, Miller, O'Dea, O'Neil, Palm, Porter, Rebimbas, Riley, Smith, Walker, Young

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): [Gavel] I'd like to call to order the Judiciary Committee public hearing for Monday, February 25. Chairman Winfield will read the safety instructions.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Good morning. In the interest of safety, I would ask you to note the location of and access to the exits in this the hearing room. The two doors which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go to your right and proceed to the main stairs or follow the exit signs to one of the fire stairs. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing
room and stay away from the exit doors until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Any remarks? Just note Senator Flexer is out on district business. All right, proceeding onto our agenda, we will go in order. I will call up each of our nominees, allow them to give a brief opening statement, questions from the Committee and then public testimony following that. First up, nomination to be a judge of the Appellate Court, the Honorable Alexandria D. DiPentima. Judge DiPentima, before you sit, can you just raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God, under penalty of perjury? Thank you. Just make sure you hit your button there in front of you, turn the microphone on and proceed with your opening statement. Thank you.

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Judge, just pull the mike down in front of you so that it records. There you go.

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Should I start again?

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Go ahead.

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Okay. Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. It is an honor to appear before you and my thanks to Governor Lamont for nominating me for
reappointment. In November of 1993, upon Governor Weicker's nomination, the legislature appointed me to the trial bench. I enjoyed a variety of assignments with my last being as Administrative Judge of the Judicial District of Litchfield. In May of 2003, Governor Roland successfully nominated me for appointment to the Appellate Court and on that court I have written 586 published opinions. In 2010, I became Chief Judge of the Appellate Court and continue to serve in that role. Is it a particular privilege to serve the citizens of Connecticut on the Appellate Court and as Chief Judge? My thanks to former Chief Justice Rogers for entrusting me with this position as well as the position of Chair of the Public Service and Trust Commission which produced the Judicial Branch's first strategic plan. I am proud to say that the implementation of that plan continues under the leadership of Chief Justice Robinson in its second phase addressing human capital that is the wonderful workforce of the branch. To serve as a judge has been a challenging and rewarding experience in many ways. I would be most grateful for the opportunity to continue the adventure and I welcome your questions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Judge. Questions from the Committee?

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Good morning.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): I was just interested in your answer to question number three on the questionnaire asking about how you feel the Constitution should be interpreted, and you said it should be in some measure context based, uh, which I
tend to agree with. I just wondered if you could elaborate on that a bit?

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Well I think just because the times have certainly changed since the framers of the Constitution did their work and I think in that regard with technology and all the other, and the growth of our gloriously diverse population has really made, made context an important part of interpreting the Constitution.


HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Okay.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Senator.

Further questions from the Committee? Judge, I think you have, thank you very much for your long and distinguished serve on the bench and, uh, the job you're doing running our Appellate Court. I appreciate it.

HONORABLE ALEXANDRIA DIPENTIMA: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be the Honorable Barbara Bellis of Shelton to be a Judge of the Superior Court. Good morning, Judge. If you'll raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Just make sure you hit the button in front of you there, adjust the mike, and proceed with your opening statement.
HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: That's good? Okay. Representative Stafstrom, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, good morning. My name is Barbara Bellis and I thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you, and I'd like to thank Governor Lamont for nominating me for a third eight-year term. It is truly an honor and a privilege to be here. Since I was last before you, I've remained in the same assignment which is Judge of Civil for the Bridgeport Superior Court. Also in 2014, I became and administrative judge for the district and as a general rule, the administrative judge term is a five-year term, so again, I anticipate that I would be rotating out of Bridgeport in September of this year. In January of this year, I took over Judge Zemetis's complex litigation docket in Waterbury with the anticipation that I will be doing that full time come September when I leave Bridgeport. I would be very grateful to this Committee and the General Assembly for the opportunity to continue to serve the State of Connecticut as a Superior Court Judge, and I welcome any questions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Judge. Questions from the Committee? Representative O'Dea.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Good morning.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Just for the record, for the members of the Committee, I do appear in Bridgeport Superior Court on a regular basis. I don't have any cases pending there now but I just want to thank Your Honor for your service and let people know that the Bridgeport Court, despite its elevators being
out every once in a while and one of the oldest buildings, it is one of the best run and I think most of the attorneys if not all would agree that it is so well run and civilly because of Your Honor's efforts in working hard and Her Honor has a treadmill in her office that is often used but in all candor, Your Honor, Bridgeport is one of the favorites of anybody to try a case in and you run a tight ship, a fair ship, and thank you very much for all your service to the State of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative McGorty.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Good morning.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): Thanks for coming in today.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.

REP. MCGORTY (122ND): I just want to say congratulations on your nomination for reelection and I want to thank you for over the years always hosting the legislation down at the courthouse, giving us the tour meeting, everybody that's involved in getting your workload down the road pretty speedy so thank you for coming in and good luck to you in the process.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.


REP. PALM (36TH): Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Good morning.
REP. PALM (36TH): Is it possible for you to discuss either of the cases involving Bushmaster or can you not do that because they're pending?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I, they are pending so I wouldn't, I'd be -

REP. PALM (36TH): Okay.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: [Crosstalk] the code but.

REP. PALM (36TH): Can, can you give us another case that you could talk about and why it mattered to your or what was particularly of interest to you? You cited several here. I'm just wondering if you could give us some insight.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Yeah, I, they're, it's hard to pick out a favorite. It's like, you know, picking out a favorite child. Some of them have more challenges than others. I tend to enjoy the um political cases you know the election cases. It's tricky trying to navigate through the statutes and such but I, I probably, I probably would pick the election cases as some of my favorite and we've seen our fair share in Bridgeport, yeah.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Further questions from the Committee? Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Good morning.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Good morning.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): So we're going to hear later from some people after you. I want to give you an opportunity if you would like to speak to any of those cases because I know that, I know I just read through that most of them were dismissed, but why cases are dismissed is sometimes a technicality
so if you want to illuminate us on what has happened, I think it would be useful.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: All right. I haven't seen anything or heard of anything although I do recognize some litigants in the audience, some of whom have pending cases so I'm prohibited from discussing pending cases. The only thing I would say is this. I modeled myself as a presiding judge over my first presiding judge who was also my mentor and I learned from him that to be a good presiding judge of the district, you know you're the one that manages the docket and gives the cases out, but a good presiding judge, I believe based on what I've learned, takes the more difficult cases whether it's something that you know you'll be criticized in the news or whether it has tricky legal issues or difficult parties, whatever it is. So I've always been of the belief that as a presiding judge, I should try to handle any difficult cases myself and not you know sort of dump them on the line judges. So I probably have seen my fair share of tricky cases over my nine or ten years as presiding judge in Bridgeport so that might be a reason, but I don't, I'm not sure what cases are at issue today since I haven't heard anything.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Okay and I guess I have a question. So if you have a pro se before you, do you treat them exactly as you would someone who's a member of the Bar or do you have some level of leniency and how do you think about that?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Well we definitely have to be accommodating. You know we're very cognizant that they come from a different background than the attorneys that appear before us and I understand it's extremely difficult to prosecute your own case
or to defend your own case so we have great resources in our courthouse. We have an information desk right on the first floor that's staffed with helpful people, a library on the seventh floor. We have self-help on the internet. We have forms that can be used so I'm always trying my best to direct the litigants to the resources that they have but I think that you know I would not be honest if I didn't say it's difficult to represent yourself when you haven't had the benefit of law school and years of legal experience and the assistance that attorneys normally have.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Judge, let me just follow up on that a little bit. You referenced in your questionnaire, question number 21, you listed five Judicial Review Council complaints that have been, I guess five complaints from four different individuals since your last appointment. If I could just ask for the record, did the foreclosure case from Mr. Lynch, does that case remain pending? Not the complaint, the underlying foreclosure action.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I know he has a pending foreclosure action that's not the original foreclosure action, but there's a new one that Judge Kamp, I gave it to him to handle. I don't think his original, uh, Mr. Lynch's original foreclosure case is pending but I honestly don't know. I know he had a, he was also defending a collection case and then he brought a counterclaim for legal malpractice. That's, I don't think that's pending either but I know that there is one pending case.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So could you just enlighten the Committee on what, what the claims were in that
Judicial Review Council complaint and why the claim was, why the claim was dismissed?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Well I think for Mr. Lynch, I think he's filed three Judicial Review complaints against me. I think he filed one in 2015, one in 2018, and I believe after I filled out this questionnaire, he filed another one in 2019. He also, he also filed a federal lawsuit against, against me and I know at the time the chief justice, the chief court administrator and other judges and staff. I think that's been dismissed, at least as to me it's been dismissed. I assume it's been dismissed against the other judicial defendants as well but I, it's hard to exactly say if there's one particular claim that's made in the various Judicial Review complaints or lawsuits. It's like a myriad of different complaint and I don't know that it's proper to get into the ADA part of it now, but that's part of, I think of the lawsuits and the various complaints.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Okay. That's fine. I, like I said, we wanted to give you the opportunity if you wanted to address those complaints to do so, but if you can't then that's okay.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Well, I, I know that the first two Judicial Review complaints were dismissed for no probable cause.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I didn’t get involved in them. I didn’t respond to them and they were dismissed and the 2019 Judicial Review complaint was just recently filed so I think it's probably still on their docket and I'm not sure that I should talk
about that but I, you know I stand on my record, sir. I do. If anybody wanted to show me a transcript or anything I'm happy, truly happy --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): No, no, no.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: To respond to it.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. And then there are, there's a couple others, Brashaun Thompson and that was arising out of a 2007 case and that was dismissed.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Yeah, he filed two separate Judicial Review complaints. I tried his criminal cases to a verdict and I know they went up on appeal. I was affirmed on appeal. I think that if I recall, and I'm sorry I didn't look at his, I think that those claims were mostly claims of law as I recall.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): And Anthony Caltabiano, Caltabiano?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Yeah, I didn't, that I don't recall. I did bring the, I believe I brought with the complaints with me. Would you like me to go get them, I can take a look? I think that one, I don't recall really ruling on anything in that case but generally what happens is all the cases filter through me. I don't remember ruling on anything in his case but I'm sure I had my hands on it at some point.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): And you believe these complaints arise primarily out of your role as the chief presiding judge and being the one moving the business through the courthouse?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I believe so.
REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. And what about Mr. Roman? Does his case remain pending?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I know he was in my courtroom recently and I don’t recall if it was his original foreclosure case which has been pending I think for around 20 years now, or if it was another foreclosure case, but I, because I had to disclose on the record when I called his case that he had filed complaints against me. In fact, he told me in the courtroom that day that he would be here and that he was going to testify against me but, um, I, he does have some pending case.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Judge do you normally hear the property foreclosure docket in Bridgeport or does somebody else do that?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I normally don’t. I do the foreclosure mediation, I rule on those issues but I normally, um, I normally don’t get involved. I did get involved in Mr. Roman's because so many judges were not able to handle his case back when it came time to deal with the foreclosure judgement so I stepped in and I was the one that entered the judgement of foreclosure. That was probably five years ago.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. And that was because other judges were conflicted out for various reasons or?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): All right. Okay. Senator Winfield?

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. I guess the question is what is your standard for recusing yourself from a case?
HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Well I do recuse myself, of course my husband's a lawyer, from his cases and if I had ever represented any of the parties. I wouldn't normally recuse myself. I always make a disclosure under Practice Book 120A, we have to make a disclosure of anyone's filed a judicial review complaint against us or a lawsuit so I'll make a disclosure but I haven't, I generally will still handle the case or at least handle where the case is going to go to be decided.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: You don't have to automatically not handle a case that someone's filed with a complaint against you but you do have to make the disclosure ethically under the code in the practice book.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): I, I wasn't suggesting, I just wanted to know what you, how you, what your disposition was on those issues. Thank you.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Okay.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hi Judge, thanks for coming in. I appreciate it. On, I just want to follow on the Chairman's discussion with you about question 21. Often we get kind of a narrative description of what the complaints were. I, I don't, it doesn't look like, at least I don't have a copy of any type of description of what the person complained about. You know, the description is arising out of a civil case doesn't really give us much to go on. Would you be able to, without, you know, I don't mean to put you on the spot, you know, some of these you obviously don't recall but
the ones you do, can you at least give us some idea of what the complaint against you was?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I have them with me and I'm happy to share copies if any, I don’t have them in front of me, I have them in my folder but I can do the easy ones. Mr. Roman, that was the case that everyone was recusing themselves and it was time to enter, it was an old case and it was time to enter, deal with the motion for foreclosure so I stepped in and I simply ruled on the motion and I got the complaint from that so it was dismissed just, you know, different claims that it shouldn’t have gone forward and so forth.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Claiming that you should have recused yourself?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: No, that wasn’t a claim that I should have recused myself. I think it was a claim that just in general about the foreclosure case and how it shouldn’t have gone forward and the judgement shouldn’t have gone forward.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. Any of the others you can recall?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Well Mr. Lynch's, that, the first two arose out of the case where he had been sued for collection arising out of his divorce action and then he counterclaimed for legal malpractice and I didn’t handle the trial but I know at some point he had ADA claims that he felt that weren’t accommodated and at that time, the judges were not to get involved with the ADA claims so I referred it to our ADA liaison in the courthouse and I think that those complaints as I recall arose out of dissatisfaction with the ADA claims and I'm sure some of my minor rulings in the case, even though I
didn’t do the trial in the case. For Bruchaun Thompson was the criminal trial that I had done you know many years before the complaint and as I recall, those complaints arose out of rulings in the case as opposed to any behavior, and Mr. Caltabiano, I do have it and I can look. You know, it was a recent one. I didn’t really do anything substantive in it that I recall, but I could be wrong.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay so when you say arising out of the rulings, that your rulings went against him and he wasn’t happy so he filed a complaint.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: That's I'm sure part of it, yeah.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. Well if you wouldn’t mind providing those materials, I'd appreciate it.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I'm happy to.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you very much and thank you for coming in.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Representative Miller.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you, Chair and welcome.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Congratulations on your reappointment and just to piggyback on my colleague, it's, I would appreciate the details as well. I also wonder if you could walk me through the judicial review process? So someone files a complaint against you. Do they then contact you, the Committee contacts you or the Council?
HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I'm happy to answer this question because in fact I saw on the Judicial Review Council for three years. My term ended probably around six months ago so if a, someone files a complaint against a judge, they send the complaint to the Judicial Review Council and the Judicial Review Council then notifies the judge that there's been a complaint, and then I would say normally the judge doesn't respond to the complaint because you can tell on the face that there might not be merit and that you don't need to respond so we very rarely at that initial stage ever got a response from the judge. You know, you just let the Judicial Review Council do their investigation so I never responded to the complaints because I didn't feel it was necessary and that's the typical course. The judge doesn't respond. Every so often, the Judicial Review Council will reach out to the judge and ask for an explanation or more information or they'll reach out to other individuals to do an investigation to get more information in determining whether or not there's probable cause and the complaints are adjudicated. Now when I sat on the Judicial Review Council, we did take action against some judges but normally, cases would be dismissed either for no probably cause or because the statute of limitations had run.

REP. MILLER (145TH): So do they notify you of the outcome of the complaint?

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Yes, they do, they do. They send you a letter and the nice thing is when they send you the original notice and a copy of the complaint, they'll remind you of your obligation under the code and the practice book to make sure you make the practice book 120A disclosure when you
handle any of the cases so that only, you know, obviously the person that might have sued you or bought a complaint against you knows that they did so but that the party on the other side also knows that, um, you've either been sued or had a complaint filed against you so you're obligated to do that on the record.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Okay. Thank you very much and I'm going to ask the administration to please, for question number 21, that we be given detailed information when a judge has identified for complaints that have been filed against them so that we're better about to make a, a decision, an informed decision so thank you very much and I would appreciate if you would send us that information as well.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: I'm happy to.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Porter. Oh, sorry, I had you on my list. Further questions from the Committee?

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Good morning.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Congratulations on your nomination and I know that we'll be getting additional information based on your testimony here today and your questionnaire as well. I just wanted to also take an opportunity as we're reviewing all the documents and information that's provided to us just to share with you as well that we have gotten some submissions of testimony from several attorneys
who have appeared before you in court and it seems like it's pretty consistent that your testimony and a lot of stuff that's said by the attorneys is that it's a very heavy docket that you have before you, and also your diligence in moving that docket. We have comments such as that you're thorough and fair to all litigants, their attorneys and fosters fair resolution. You run a tight ship in the courtroom. The judge is able to control the flow of business in her courtroom and the size of the docket was substantial on the day we were in court, and also that you're one of the finest members of the judiciary we have sitting on the bench today. She works ungodly hours, knows every civil case in the judicial district and is more prepared than any judge I have ever encountered. I mean that's a pretty strong statement to make on behalf of any judge so I just kind of wanted to highlight all of the information obviously that's being provided to us and acknowledge the fact that the dockets that come before you are certainly heavy ones. And we certainly appreciate your diligence and hard work in that regard and will certainly continue to review all the information that's provided to us and the testimony that will be later coming forth. Thank you, Your Honor.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Further questions? Seeing none, Judge, thank you very much.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): I certainly, your reputation within the bar down in the Bridgeport area is one of being able to move cases and being able to keep tabs on a very heavy docket down there
and we wish you luck as you transition beyond that role so take care.

HONORABLE BARBARA BELLIS: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be the Honorable Robin Wilson of New Haven. If you might, raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Good morning, Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Ranking Member Kissel, Ranking Member Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I am honored to be given the opportunity to appear before you today. I would also like to thank Governor Lamont for nominating me to a third term as a judge of the superior court. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of the State of Connecticut for the past 16 years. I was appointed to the bench in 2003. My first assignment was in GA20 in Norwalk where I handled criminal matters. The next year I was assigned to the Stamford JB where I handled criminal jury trials. In 2005, I was assigned to the Bridgeport Superior Court for juvenile matters where I presided over delinquency and child protection cases and in 2006, I was assigned to the Child Protection Session in Middletown where I presided over neglect, termination of parental rights, and order of temporary custody trials. In 2009, I was assigned to the New Haven Judicial District where I presently
preside over civil jury and court trials. I truly love my job as a trial court judge including the challenge of researching the law and writing opinions, and since my appointment on the bench, I proudly say that I've written over 600 opinions. Having been on the Superior Court Bench for 16 years, I've handled many complex trials and legal issues during my assignments in criminal juvenile and civil. I've never been afraid to take on difficult and challenging cases which at times often involved new legal issues with which I had previously been unfamiliar. I've always embraced those cases and have worked hard to master the issues raised by the parties and to render and fair and well-reasoned opinion, appropriately applying the law to the facts of the case. Serving as a Superior Court Judge has been very humbling to me as I understand the importance and significance of the cases that come before me. It is an important responsibility and one I take seriously to ensure that each person who appears before me is treated fairly and with respect. I enjoy serving the State of Connecticut and its citizens and would be most grateful to this Committee and the General Assembly for your approval of my nomination for reappointment. Thank you and I welcome any questions you might have.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Judge. Judge, on your questionnaire on question 21, you listed one Judicial Review Council complaint and provided a description. It appears that was a civil matter in which one of the litigants took issue with some evidentiary rulings. Was, I assume it was the determination of the Judicial Review Council that the Court is the right place to take up issues with evidentiary rulings made during a case and not the
Judicial Review Council, that's why it was dismissed?

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: That is correct.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Any further questions from the Committee? Representative O'Dea followed by Representative Smith.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Good morning.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): I just want to point out for the Committee normally, well, Your Honor that, that Ms. Bennett claimed that you admitted evidence, that was not by the lawyer making an appeal, that was her making, it was the actual litigant making a complaint, correct?

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Yes. I should also point out that there was an appeal to the Appellate Court and I was affirmed.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Congratulations on that. Your Honor, I haven't been before you in a while but I do want to relate to the Committee that everyone I've talked to holds you in very high regard, fair to both sides, and I thank you very much for your service and for answering our questions here today. Thank you very much, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Representative Smith.
REP. SMITH (108TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, good morning and good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Good morning.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Your Honor, our question number 22 asks whether you have ever held an attorney in contempt. Your answer was no but you did fine a lawyer who appeared before you and I'm just wondering if you can discuss that with the Committee.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: I did fine a lawyer for violation of practice book 125. I thought that the claims that he was making during a jury trial were inappropriate and not in good faith. I thought that because of those claims made, I spent a lot of time which wasted the jury's time in handling the issue that was, that was brought up during the trial. It was, I, I even had to apologize to the jury because there was a lot of time taken up during the jury trial by the lawyer and it ultimately was an issue that was irrelevant to the issues before the jury. It was also, and I think he recognized that. I don't wish to go into too much detail because of the lawyer, you know, I don't want do disclose the lawyer and he and I have talked since then. He's been before me on a pretrial and I think he understood why the fine was issued and I take it very seriously. I mean I understand that lawyers have to report those fines and I think you can see, as I stated in my questionnaire form that in my entire 16 years as a judge, that's the first time I've ever taken it upon myself to have to issue a fine against a lawyer.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Well thank you for the response, Judge. I mean I don't know anything about
the case, you know have any further documentation about the case and the only concern that entered my mind when I first read it, and I'm glad it's only one time in 16 years, but you know as you know, sitting in front of, sitting before attorneys as they argue cases before you, sometimes there are novel paths that lawyers may take to pursue a claim which make new law and has been our history of jury prudence so I'd hate to see a situation where somebody was pursuing a novel idea or a novel claim and is fined for. I don't know what the fine is. I'm hoping it's not significant but I can also appreciate your Honor if somebody does waste the court's time with frivolous claims. We have all been exposed to that time and I think it's a waste of the court's time and a waste of everybody's time actually so maybe you could elaborate just a little bit for the Committee.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: It wasn't a novel legal issue that was being raised. It was an issue where the attorney had subpoenaed a witness to come and testify and knowing, knowing that he was not going to call that witness to make the argument that the witness was available when it wasn't necessary for him to make that argument. It was to break the case and the fact that the witness was available was not relevant nor germane to the, to the issue, issues before the jury. In fact, the lawyer had the requested discovery that he was looking for so it was, I spent 45 minutes to an hour on argument and then I accommodated the lawyer by saying okay, subpoena, have the witness come down. We took time out of the day to have the witness come and appear thinking that the witness was going to testify but the lawyer chose not, he said I'm not calling the witness and I was gonna call the witness. I only
want to make the argument that the witness was available. I have, I have, if you want a copy of the transcript I can provide it to the Committee.

REP. SMITH (108TH): I don't think it's necessary, Judge, not for me. If the other members wish it, they can, they can certainly obtain it. I think you’ve answered the questions to my satisfaction. I'm just, one final question, are the fines that are issued by the court, are they regulated in terms of the amount or is it discretionary?

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: It's discretionary but I mean, the fine, I thought I put in the response that the fine was $125.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Well for an hour's waste of time it's probably very reasonable so thank you, Judge, and congratulations on your nomination.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.


REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and not a question, just a comment. So glad to see you here today. I wanted to personally congratulate you on your reappointment to the superior court. I have to agree with one of my colleagues that stated earlier when your name comes up you are commended, highly commended for the work you do in New Haven so thank you for the great representation for the city of New Haven.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You're welcome. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Miller.

REP. MILLER (145TH): Thank you and congratulations, Judge. I want to, as a newbie on the Committee, I want to thank you for the detail that you provided the Committee during your application. It answered questions that I normally have and very detailed and so I want to thank you for addressing some of the questions I have and I want to say I'm sorry for the loss of your father as well last year.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Representative O'Dea.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you. Uh, Your Honor, just to clarify for the members of the Committee, my recollection of the way it used to be is you'd have to prove, in order to get I think it was called a second DINO charge that the witness was available and you chose not to bring them in and therefore, the jury would get a charge that you could make a negative inference on that second DINO charge it was called, as I recall and you got, the judiciary got rid of that requirement of subpoena to show availability so I understand your testimony, despite the fact that the lawyer knew that he didn't have to do that subpoena to prove availability to get a second DINO charge which isn't available anymore, he still did it and that's why you sanctioned him as I understand your testimony?

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Right. And I didn't think it was a second DINO issue because he ultimately, based upon the defense counsel had been given the discovery that he was looking for specifically on the issue that he claimed he didn't have the disc-,
he had the discovery and so it was not necessary to bring this subpoena and then argue availability because he had the discovery and he also had the defendant's witness, the owner of the company there to testify regarding the documents that he needed and he ultimately got a verdict in his favor, a good verdict in his favor.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Well thank you very much, Your Honor. I just wanted to clarify that for the Committee. Thank you, Your Honor, again.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Further questions? Representative Rebimbas.

REP. REBIMBAS (129TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Good morning.

REP. REBIMBAS (129TH): Congratulations on your nomination. It's certainly a pleasure seeing you here, seeing that I've taken a leave of absence from the [inaudible - 00:42:03] and haven't had the opportunity obviously to be enriched by such a great group of individuals which you also participate in. As I indicated previously, we also do have testimony that was provided to us from an attorney who said that his dealings with Judge Wilson on the civil arena and I think that she's great. That's to the point and obviously confirming a lot of stuff that's already been said. I just actually wanted to maybe request from you. As we progress, this Committee this year is going to be taking up a lot of juvenile law type legislation proposals before us and knowing that you’ve sat on the juvenile court and currently still serve as the city of New Haven Youth Commission 2006 to the present and knowing that you have a grand knowledge and expertise in the area, as
things progress here hopefully, you know and I know that there's you know the judicial branch that we'll go through and we have some meetings scheduled with the judicial branch but I think you would bring a unique perspective and insight just based on obviously your experience so I hope it's an invitation that if it's extended, it's one that we work collaboratively with you in order obviously to continue the great work that you're doing and as legislators hope to do in the proposal that we pass.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Absolutely.

REP. REBIMBAS (129TH): So great. Thank you and congratulations on your nomination.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Walker.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Good morning.

REP. WALKER (93RD): It's a pleasure to see you again and it's really a pleasure because I have had the opportunity to talk to you on many occasions about your commitment to our kids and our communities and I really appreciate everything that you have done and what you've championed both publicly and privately trying to show the importance of what it is we need to do to give back to our kids. I also want to echo what my colleague just said. I would love to have you be part of our conversation in talking about some of the things in the juvenile courts and how we can work best with everybody to make sure that everything comes out positively so I want to congratulate you. I don’t
have a question. I just want to congratulate you on your reappointment.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And renomination and I know everybody will accept the fact that you are an outstanding judge for our communities. Thank you.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Further questions? Representative Dillon.

REP. DILLON (92ND): Good morning. I just wanted to say hello. I haven't seen you in a while and I'm very happy to see you here today.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. DILLON (92ND): And I hope you go further.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you, Representative Dillon. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Further questions? Seeing none, thank you, Judge.

HONORABLE ROBIN WILSON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be the Honorable Lubbie Harper of North Haven to be a State Referee. Judge, if you just before you sit, raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.
HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm honored to be given the opportunity to appear before you today. I would also like to thank Governor Lamont for nominating me for reappointment as a State Referee. I was appointed to the bench in May of 1997. Since that time I've served as a Superior Court Judge in the Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven criminal courts. I was elevated to the Appellate Court in January 2005 and subsequently elevated to the Supreme Court in March 2011. After reaching the mandatory retirement age as a member of the Supreme Court, I was delegated to sit on the Appellate Court which is the location of my current assignment. I am humbled and I truly considered it to have been an honor and privilege to serve the people of the State of Connecticut as a judicial officer for nearly 22 years. It is an important responsibility and one that I take seriously to ensure that each person who appears before me is treated with dignity and respect. I would be most grateful to this Committee and the General Assembly for approval of my nomination. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.


REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Your Honor.

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: Good morning.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): We have a mutual friend, Judge Kevin Doyle who speaks very highly of you. You were a mentor of his and a guiding light in his life and
obviously your reputation precedes throughout the Bar in the State of Connecticut and we thank you very much for your continued years of service and your agreement to continue to serve our great State. Thank you very much, sir.

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: Thank you.


REP. REBIMBAS (129TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Your Honor. I just have to comment as well. You know certainly there are individuals who we meet throughout our professional careers that we hold in the highest esteem and I'm going to have to say that you're certainly one of those and I think you know it's unfortunate that we do have the mandatory retirement age of the Supreme Court but thank goodness that we can still keep you involved because I think again, your expertise and involvement in judicial branch is just such an asset to us so congratulations on your nomination.

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: Thank you so much.


SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. I don’t, as people may know, I don’t always comment in this kind of congratulatory period but I will here. Your work in the judicial system goes without question, I believe, but also your work goes beyond that and for that I'm thankful because it has something to do with the belief that people have that the system can actually work by interacting with people like yourself outside of the system so thank you.

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: All right, thank you. I appreciate it.
REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Thank you, Justice Harper for your continued willingness to serve the people of the State of Connecticut. We really appreciate it.

HONORABLE LUBBIE HARPER: All right. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Next up will be the Honorable John Mulcahy of Glastonbury to be a State Referee. If you could raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE JOHN MULCAHY: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

HONORABLE JOHN MULCAHY: Good morning. My name is John Mulcahy. I'm a resident of Glastonbury. I wish to thank Governor Lamont for nominating me and all the members of the Committee for considering my reappointment. I am honored to have been nominated and to be afforded this opportunity to appear before you today. I was originally nominated as a Superior Court Judge by the late Governor Ella T. Grasso. I served in that role until becoming a State Referee. Since that time I have served as a Judge Trial Referee primarily in the Hartford Judicial District. Throughout my years a Superior Court Judge I presided in practically all the decisions of the court with assignments in a number of judicial districts including Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Windham and Middletown. In the decade or so preceding my becoming a referee, I was assigned to the Part A Division in Hartford presiding over major felony cases. As a Judge Trial Referee, I have done criminal trials, sat on three-judge court
proceedings, conducted hearings as a grand juror, and various GA dockets as needed, and I currently hear post-verdict matters including petitions for new trial, habeas corpus petitions including most recently medical condition of confinement cases along with motions to correct various sentences. As a Judge Trial Referee, I have also sat in housing court, community court, and handled delinquency dockets in the juvenile court. My schedule is not fixed but generally is subject to the needs of the presiding judge. During the past fiscal year, it averages to about two or three days per week. It has indeed been a privilege and an honor to serve the citizens of the State of Connecticut in a judicial capacity. During the past fiscal year I averaged as I stated about two or three days per week in that capacity. I look forward to continuing in that public service and I respectively seek your support and approval of my nomination. Thank you very much and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Judge. Questions from the Committee? Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Your Honor, for continuing to serve the State of Connecticut. My wife is always asking me isn’t it about time you start thinking about retirement and I see you still here before the Committee looking for more work so you give me hope, you give me courage to continue on and I just wanted to thank you for that.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): can you just raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE JOHN MULCAHY: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative, there's not a mandatory retirement age for legislators.

REP. SMITH (108TH): There should be. [laughter]

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you very much, Judge.

HONORABLE JOHN MULCAHY: Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up we have Donald Green of Meriden to be a Family Support Magistrate. Hold on one second. If you could raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE DONALD R. GREEN: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Please proceed with your opening statement.

HONORABLE DONALD R. GREEN: Good morning, Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Senator Kissel and Representative Rebimbas and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I am honored and humbled to be here today and thank you for your consideration. I would also like to thank Governor Lamont for nominating me for reappointment to a Family Support Magistrate. I'd like to thank my beautiful wife, Bonnie, who is here with me today for her continued love and support. By way of background, I was born and raised in Meriden and I continue to reside there. I am a graduate of
Trinity College and the University of Connecticut School of Law. I have worked in the office of the Attorney General as an assistant Attorney General for over 22 years. My primary assignment has been in the child protection department where I prosecuted child abuse, child neglect, and termination of parental rights cases. I have also represented the Department of Children and Families and UConn Health Center before the Office of the Claims Commission, Freedom of Information Commission, and the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. I have been fortunate to have excellent opportunities for growth at the Office of the Attorney General. My duties have expanded in many different areas and I have received several outstanding performance ratings. I am excited about the opportunity to further expand my skills and serve the public in a new role with great responsibility. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of the State of Connecticut for the last 22 years as an Assistant Attorney General. Since working as a Family Support Magistrate in Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury superior courts for the past several weeks, I have enjoyed my new role in presiding over cases involving paternity, child support, modifications and contempt petitions. I would be most grateful for your support and approval for the position of Family Support Magistrate. Thank you for this opportunity and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Magistrate Green. It seems like déjà vu all over again.

HONORABLE DONALD R. GREEN: Oh yes.
REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): We just did this not too long ago. Questions from the Committee? I guess the last couple of weeks have been okay because there doesn’t appear to be any questions from the Committee and they seem satisfied with the answers you gave a couple weeks ago so thank you, congratulations.

HONORABLE DONALD R. GREEN: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be J. Lawrence of Avon

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Good morning.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): If you could raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Good morning, Chairman Winfield, Senator Kissel, Chairman Stafstrom, Representative Rebimbas and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm Larry Price. I'd like to thank Governor Lamont for the honor and privilege of re-nominating me as a Family Support Magistrate. I recently moved from West Hartford to Avon with my wife, Candace, a school teacher and educator. My children, Julie and Matt, have now moved on to start their adult lives and careers. I'm a graduate of Purdue University and the Catholic University Columbus School of Law. Before practicing law I was a high school teacher and coach in West Hartford and Farmington. Since my September 14, 2018 nomination,
I've sat as a Family Support Magistrate in eight courts. Our decisions have lasting impacts on the lives of children, whether determinations of paternity, initial child support orders, subsequent modifications or decisions requiring the consistent maintenance of those orders. I have deep respect for those seeking the Magistrate Court's assistance and what we do to be just in our decisions for these children. While in law school, I worked for the Native American Rights Fund and interned with the Washington, D.C. Public Defender's Office representing incarcerated juveniles. I was fortunate to land a job with the Connecticut Prison Association running the pretrial release program and representing adult prisoners in the Legal Assistance to Prisoners Program. My legal career moved from solo practice through three law firms. I left my 16-year position at Brown, Garrison, Scott, a Hartford/Glastonbury based firm in August of last year. Though I started my career in general practice, I eventually focused almost entirely on civil litigation and jury trials. I've tried and arbitrated cases for medical malpractice, wrongful death, product liability to car accidents and premises liability. Throughout my career, community service has been an advocation. I've served on a variety of boards, sat nine years on the West Hartford Town Council, 13 years on the Metropolitan District Commission, and I coached high school boys' basketball and summer league until 2016. These experiences kept me well-grounded and mindful of the needs of those around me. I love my position as a Family Support Magistrate and I look forward to serving for the next five years. Thank you for your consideration of my re-nomination. I respectively
ask for your support and I'm happy to take any questions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions from the Committee? Representative Hill.

REP. HILL (17TH): Good morning, Magistrate.

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Good morning.

REP. HILL (17TH): I just wanted to welcome you as a constituent of mine and congratulate you on your appointment and also thank you for your service to our district and to the state.

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Thank you and congratulations to you as well.

REP. HILL (17TH): Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative O'Dea.

REP. O'DEA (125TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment. I just realized that yourself, Judge Bellis and I are all graduates of Catholic Law School and that's a good thing. Exactly. Well thank you very much for your service. Congratulations and good luck.

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: I appreciate that.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Judge, just real quick question. Did you mention you've been in eight courts in six months?

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Yeah.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Is that normal?

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: So there are nine magistrates and we cover 15 courts so we have
specific assignments, but occasionally we have to step in for other people. So currently I'm assigned to Putnam, Norwich, New Haven, and Hartford during my week so I'm not running around all the time but that's typical. None of us sit in any one place and it's great actually. I love it.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Putting a lot of miles on the car. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

HONORABLE J. LAWRENCE PRICE: Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Moving on, next up will be Toni Fatone from West Hartford to be a Workers' Compensation Commissioner. Ms. Fatone, welcome back.

TONI M. FATONE: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

TONI M. FATONE: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

TONI M. FATONE: Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, and Representative Rebimbas and the distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Toni Marie Fatone of West Hartford and it is an honor and a privilege to speak to you this morning about my nomination for appointment to the Workers' Compensation Commissioner. Thank you for having me today and thanks also to Governor Lamont for this appointment and for his confidence to serve the
citizens of Connecticut as a Workers' Compensation Commissioner. I am married to Dr. Robert Rutstein and have two daughters, Katherine Olivia Rutstein who is 19, Carolyn Grace Rutstein who is 17. I was born and raised in Norwich, Connecticut and graduated from the Norwich Free Academy in 1979. In 1983 I graduated cum laude from the University of Connecticut with a degree in political science and a minor in history. My legal career has been both public sector and private sector-based and has provided me a unique perspective as a Workers' Compensation Commissioner. After college I worked for the Senate Clerk's Office here in the General Assembly for a year, then attended the Stetson University College of Law in St. Petersburg, Florida where I graduated in 1987. I was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1987 and the Connecticut Bar in 1988. I returned to Connecticut after law school to pursue my passion, public policy. As clerk of the Select Committee on Family in the Workplace, I was fortunate to help with the work of making Connecticut the first state to adopt the Family and Medical Leave Act. Connecticut's law became the basis for the national FMLA law. My work on the committee led to healthcare and administrative law becoming the foundation of my career. I then served as a research attorney for the Senate Majority Caucus and later as the legislative liaison to the Senate in the O'Neill administration. From 1990 to 1991 I was manager of government relations at United Technologies Corporation. I left UTC to become the Director of Government Relations for Sullivan and LeShane. From 1991 to 1995, I represented clients such as the State Medical Society, State Dental Association, the Anesthesiologist Bridgeport Hospital, and the Connecticut Association of
Healthcare Facilities. In 1995, I was named Executive Vice-President of the Connecticut Association of Healthcare Facilities where I remained until 2009. From 2009 through January 2015, I was the CEA of TMS Healthcare Consulting Services, LLC and was retained as the in-house legal expert on the Affordable Care Act for the American Healthcare Association in Washington, D.C. In that position, I traveled the country teaching member employers their responsibilities under the Affordable Care Act. From February 2015 to January 2, 2019, I served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services where I became knowledgeable of the State's Workers' Compensation Commission. I am so very honored to have received this nomination and I am proud of the work I am doing as a Workers' Compensation Commissioner and I am before you today to ask for your support on my appointment. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Ms. Fatone and again, it seems like déjà vu so the public and those watching know we have a few nominees before us who were just recently before us at the close of last calendar year and pursuant to those interim appointments, these are, these are to confirm as full appointments following the interim so it was only a couple of weeks ago and I think you’ve actually only been handling your own docket for a week or two at this stage, right?

TONI M. FATONE: Just about three, yeah.

REP. SMITH (108TH): I must have missed the last opportunity to ask questions so I'll ask them now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

TONI M. FATONE: Good morning.

REP. SMITH (108TH): It's just more of a general question than anything about your application or nomination. There's some bills pending before the legislature this year dealing with Workers' Comp and I'm just wondering from your perspective what issues, if any that you see as a commissioner that appear before you?

TONI M. FATONE: Representative Smith, I have not had the opportunity to look at the proposed legislation that's pending. In my weeks of training and now serving my own docket, every district works very diligently to move the business as quickly as possible. I push counsel on some cases to come back more quickly than they otherwise would choose to do to ensure that claimants are getting the Workers' Compensation benefits that they deserve, but I believe that the districts are working very well. I've had the privilege of being in Waterbury, Middletown, and now in Hartford and I am not aware after spending time in multiple districts that there are any serious problems. Every commissioner that I've worked with shares my desire to keep that docket moving as quickly as possible.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Well we're happy to hear that and thank you for your short interim service and continued success.

TONI M. FATONE: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none,
thank you very much for being with us again this morning. Finally, we have Pedro Segarra to be a Workers' Compensation Commissioner. To start if you could raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm as the case may be that the information you will provide to this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God or under penalty of perjury?

PEDRO E. SEGARRA: I do.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

PEDRO E. SEGARRA: Good morning Co-Chair Winfield, Co-Chair Stafstrom, ranking member Kissel and ranking member Rebimbas and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Pedro Segarra and it's a privilege and honor to be before you asking for your support in response to my nomination as Workers' Compensation Commissioner. I'm grateful to Governor Lamont for this nomination and I hope to answer any questions that you might have. I was born in Puerto Rico. I've been a resident of Hartford for the past 45 years having arrived here when I was 15. I basically went to schools in Hartford and graduated from Capital Community College, University of Hartford, University of Connecticut Graduate School of Social Work, and the University of Connecticut School of Law. I've been admitted to the Connecticut Bar and the Federal Bar since 1986. I have been practicing for about 33 years. I am married and live in Hartford. I have no children but I've always stated that my passion are my nieces and nephews. We have a saying in Spanish that he who is not given sons and daughters are given and blessed with nephews. I'm very proud of them. They're all honor students. Half of them have graduated from college or are in college and
the other half have very high aspirations. After graduating from the University of Connecticut Graduate School of Social Work, I worked as a psychotherapist, psychiatrist social worker in Hartford Hospital. I then worked for a short while as a state prosecutor. After that, I worked as a Corporation Counsel for the city of Hartford for about five years, served as a city councilperson, served as a city council president, and also served as mayor for approximately five years. I've been serving now as the Workers' Compensation Commissioner with a split assignment to Middletown and New Britain. I've been doing that for the past five months. I've handled a little over 1000 informal hearings, several dozen pre-formals and several formal hearings. It's been a great opportunity to continue to learn more about Workers' Compensation law and I ask for your support in being renominated or reconfirmed for a full term. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Mr. Segarra and thank you for the work you’ve been doing and your service to the city of Hartford. The Majority Leader in the House sends along his best wishes to you as well. He wanted me to note that.

PEDRO E. SEGARRA: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you so much.

PEDRO E. SEGARRA: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): That concludes our nominations. We will now be turning to the public hearing portion. We have a few members of the public who've signed up. The first is Ed Gavin of

ED GAVIN: Good morning, Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbmas and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Edward Gavin. I'm the past president of the Criminal Defense Lawyer's Association and chair of the Judicial Reappointment Committee. We are an organization of 350 practicing criminal defense lawyers, and I'm appearing on behalf of our current president, Morgan Rueckert. Back in early January, I submitted to the Committee a packet with commentaries that had been compiled from the members of our organization regarding the reappointment of various members of the Judiciary. We compile these commentaries and have done so since 2009, submitted to the Connecticut Judicial Selection Commission in advance of these hearings as well. So these are the commentaries from the lawyers that are in the trenches regarding the reappointment of judges. Today we have a particularly small class. We appreciate your consideration of these commentaries. They are direct from our members. Two other just quick points if I may. This is me personally speaking. We have two exemplary justices among others that are here and that includes of course Justice Harper and Judge Barbara Bellis. I know Representative Rebimbmas cited some of the commentaries regarding Judge Bellis. She's been in Bridgeport. We've had the fortune to appear before her. I've tried contested hearings before her and she is an exemplary judge and I'm sure if Judge Clifford could clone her, he'd be very happy to do so. She handles the docket with grace and ease and handles the most complicated cases in an outstanding manner, just top
flight and we all know about Justice Harper. We
don’t really have to spend too much time on that
because he is just the best of the best. So thank
you for this opportunity to appear before you. If
you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.
Thank you. And Representative Stafstrom, I
apologize for the letterhead. You weren’t named at
that point so I didn’t want to appear any slight
whatsoever, sir. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): None whatsoever. We
appreciate you being here and we appreciate you guys
continuing to compile feedback for us. Questions
from the Committee? Representative Rebimbas.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Good morning. I don’t have so much a question as
just another compliment in the sense of your members
and your organization taking the time to review
these judges and providing commentary I think is a
judge testament to obviously the importance of being
able to say and voice opinions and hopefully facts
regarding certain judges that your membership
appears, and for many of us who practice in court,
we certainly have first knowledge of that. But many
of us do not practice in court so it is very helpful
and I know and I'll say that there's been other
organizations that have talked about doing the same
thing and unfortunately, they haven't come through
so I just have to again, commend and thank you for
the time that your members and the importance that
you guys put into this.

ED GAVIN: Thank you for kind comments.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative.
Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none,
thank you for being here again this morning.
ED GAVIN: Thank you for your time.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Good morning, Lou. Lou, just hit the microphone button in front of you there.

LOU ROMAN: Good morning. Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel and Representative Rebimbas. Thank you very much for allowing me this time and I just, while Judge Bellis was very clear in that this case has been around for quite a while as both of you know because we've discussed this and I wanted to address an issue that is pretty important. When somebody's in a foreclosure, solution is payment and I tried to pay off my mortgage not once, but twice in full, in the amount that was demanded and it was rejected. I live next door to Judge Holden who basically told me, and I showed him a cashier's check for the payment and he said they won't accept it. They won't let you keep the house. I found that very interesting coming from a member of the bench and I didn't believe it, but he was right because in the end, no matter what I did, no matter what evidence I submitted, no matter how I proved my case, it was ignored. In the case of Judge Bellis who I found that she really had an interest in this case, I don't agree with her that everybody just walked away from it or decided to recuse themselves, I have other beliefs but the bottom line is, there's a very specific issue here that a judge should perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently and that's cannon 3, section 3 and 4 of the judicial canons. A judge should disqualify himself or herself from a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned including, but not limited to instances where I have
filed motions to disqualify Judge Bellis for her bias and she has refused to recuse herself. And it got really interesting because when I filed my Judicial Review Council, she sat on the Judicial Review Committee and it dragged on for quite a while and that was a little bit, I asked her why she didn’t recuse herself because it was the impropriety and it's fascinating because I hear attorney's talk and you in the legislature hear only what they can tell you but in fact, there's a perception and the perception of justice is fairness and when that fairness is questioned, you have no justice and the system falls apart. And that's what's going on out here. In Judge Bellis' court, the pro se defendants are anticipating the inevitable which is that they're going to lose. Now, the most important reason that they could lose is their refusal to pay. In my case, hey, I paid. Here's the money and the money was refused with cashier certified funds not once, but twice. For the record, I'm an offshore international banker. This is not my day job but I don’t, I hate injustice and I hope that the Governor watches this because he needs to understand that the people that he's appointing, they're not vetting them, okay? Judge Bellis has been incredibly biased not in my base alone, but she's also been biased towards black attorneys as in the case of Josephine Miller where she did everything possible to disbar this poor woman and not for anything else except that she stood up for the little people.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thanks, Lou. I think they'll be some questions. I want to ask first. So is it your testimony that when you filed a Judicial Review Council complaint against Judge Bellis that she refused to recuse herself as a member of the
Judicial Review Council from hearing the complaint that was filed before that body?

LOU ROMAN: I, I, I asked the attorneys at the Judicial Review Committee why she was still on it since you know she can't sit on it. It's a conflict. It's an obvious conflict and the answer was that they didn’t know but that was her privilege.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): On that particular case? I mean I understand, if she's appointed for a term of three years, she appointed for a term of three years but the specific complaint you filed -

LOU ROMAN: She was a member.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Did she sit on the panel -

LOU ROMAN: Yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): To hear that case?

LOU ROMAN: To the best of my knowledge. I contacted Richard Meehan who was the Chairman of the Committee at the time and to the best of your knowledge she did not recuse herself and obviously her own complaint and there's another problem I have, Representative Stafstrom, is that when a judge is asked to recuse themselves, they have the privilege of denying to do it but then again you have the judicial canons that say you cannot create an image or a perception of impropriety and there's so much impropriety going on here it's ridiculous. I mean, I, I, I could not understand, I've seen the foreclosure attorneys walk into her courtroom when she's having an active argument in a case in another matter and demand this. Ben Taskowitz of Hunt, Leibert or whatever, McCalla, um, Leibert and somebody else, they, he walks in whenever he feels
like it. I was before Judge Jennings and I was arguing before him and he said, look, Judge Jennings, Judge Bellis is the boss. I do what she tells me to do. In the meantime, Taskowitz goes and he says I'm taking this case to Judge Bellis' court and he says come with me, Mr. Roman. I said wait a second. You know, what are you doing? You're going to a judge that you know the outcome of so it's pretty biased and for that reason, I was very explicit. Now, I have been dealing with pro politico which obviously Judge Bellis is going to get reappointed. There is no question. Every judge here is going to get reappointed. The question is will the public tolerate this and for how much longer. There is an imbalance in the system. There is a bias in the system and Judge Bellis is a personification of that. This had no reflection on her as a person but what she's doing here, and it's harmful to not only us. I had proof, evidence that there was no plaintiff in my case. It was a fraudulent plaintiff and she ignored it. I have proof that the, that the, uh --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Did you take an appeal of, uh her decision?

LOU ROMAN: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah and an appeal is like nothing. It's absolutely worthless. We go through the appellate procedure and at some point in time, there's a little element out here and it's called Patrick Carroll okay and according to Judge Holden, Patrick Carroll has a little book. In that little book is everything that every judge has ever done and I'm repeating what Holden told me, okay? So and I'll swear that under oath and I'll take a polygraph test to that effect so there is something underlying here. These guys are all human. These
people are human beings and when they want to ruin someone, they're very good at it like what they're doing to Attorney Miller. Every which way but Sunday they're trying to destroy this woman.


REP. SMITH (108TH): Just one question, through you, Mr. Chairman. Having sat on both sides of foreclosure claims representing both plaintiffs and defendants, usually when you tender a check for the full amount the case is dismissed and that's not a decision that's made by the court. That's a decision that's made by the lender so I'm not sure how Judge Bellis is implicated in the failure of the lender to accept your payment.

LOU ROMAN: I understand, sir, and you're correct. However, there is one little angle to this. It's called a foreclosure bench bar committee which was created by the Honorable Patrick Carroll, a committee that was comprised of foreclosure mill attorneys of which almost every judge that sat on the foreclosure docket one way or another interacted with the foreclosure mill attorneys and as a result, it's a simple matter. What I was told, they would never accept my money. The attorneys for the foreclosure, for the bank would never accept my money which shocked me. How do you feel? You owe a debt so you say, okay, here's your money, I'm out of here, this is dismissed. Well guess what? No. Not when somebody wants to make a point. They wanted to humiliate me. They foreclosed on my property, they evicted my family from my home and for the matter, they never even legally had a right to it which brings another issue because there's an FDCPA complaint being filed as we are speaking.
REP. SMITH (108TH): I think you answered my question. Logically it doesn’t make sense to me --

LOU ROMAN: Right.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Why is a lender who is owed money would not accept payment in full. The purpose behind the loan is to get repaid so --

LOU ROMAN: Thank you, sir. I'm a banker. Believe me, I agree.

REP. SMITH (108TH): Okay. Well thank you for your testimony.


REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good morning. Thank you for your testimony. I just wanted to flush out a little bit of the question that the good Chairman had inquired earlier. You had indicated that, you said to your best belief so I'm kind of trying to determine what you actually know or what you actually believe. So when you talk about Judge Bellis having sat on the Judicial Review of your complaint against her and she sat on it in that review, how do you have knowledge of this and do you have knowledge or you believe that to be true?

LOU ROMAN: Well I asked the chairman, Richard Meehan why she does not recuse herself and he pretty abruptly said it's not your call, so I assumed by that conversation that she was sitting on that committee while she was reviewing her own complaint against her.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): So there's sitting on the committee and serving on the committee and there's
sitting in the specific complaints against her so on the specific complaints against her, when you say you have this conversation with Richard Meehan did you ask specifically --

LOU ROMAN: Yes.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Is she recusing herself on my complaint against her?

LOU ROMAN: Yes.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): And when was, when was that complaint?

LOU ROMAN: I believe that was in 2014.

Representative Rebimbas, I am totally outraged by the systematic violation of the practice book rules. I am outraged by the injustice imposed on your constituents, your voters. I am outraged by the injustice of the whole system, the way it's operating now. I --

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Mr. Roman?

LOU ROMAN: Yes.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): That's why I'm trying to get to the facts --

LOU ROMAN: Yes, please.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): So we can actually look at that specifically, okay. So you indicated it was in 2014. Could it have possibly been in 2016?

LOU ROMAN: I filed, yes, it could have been in 2016, yes, correction, yes.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Okay. So it wouldn’t have been in 2014. It would’ve been 2016.
LOU ROMAN: That's correct.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Okay. So we're going to look into that.

LOU ROMAN: Please.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): And regarding your foreclosure, when was the foreclosure filed against you?


REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): And when was the final judgement of foreclosure?

LOU ROMAN: Judge Bellis ruled against me for a motion for strict foreclosure on October 30, 2017.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): So 17 years later you were foreclosed on?

LOU ROMAN: Yes. That's I just heard, excuse me a minute. Yes. She granted it and I appealed and it went for a while but --

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): And what was the decision on the appeal?

LOU ROMAN: Dismissed.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): And a strict foreclosure just for those that may not be familiar with it, is it correct that it means that the, what you owe is more than the value of the property?

LOU ROMAN: Correct.

REP. REBIMBAS (70TH): Okay. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, Lou,
thanks so much for being up here. Next up will be Ms. Gray, Jeryl Gray.

JERYL GRAY: Good morning all, Jeryl Gray of Stratford, Connecticut testifying in opposition to the reappointment of Judge Barbara Bellis. I, Jeryl Gray, am an elder person, born in Bridgeport and raised in Milford, Connecticut by parents Dolores and Joe Gray. My parents were both born into very challenging times and circumstances; Dad born to a first-generation immigrant teenager whose husband had abandoned her before Dad was even born; Mom was born in the Great Depression to two very hard-working, second-generation working-class parents. Dad, a great patriot who regarded the government of this country as a surrogate father eagerly enlisted into the Army the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed and he served combat duty in the South Pacific Theater. He returned home to Bridgeport and married the beautiful Dolores Kopazna, who herself at age 15 had begun working daily on assembly-line after school at GE, which was across the street from her school, Harding High. Much as she wanted to go for higher education, Dolores and her parents were unable to afford it and she as a teen commenced a lifetime of uninterrupted employment, working even through term in multiple pregnancies. Dad remained in service via his lifelong civil service employment in U.S. Department of Defense. In 1971, when I was a senior in high school, my mother and I and my Department of Defense day-job-employed father co-created from scratch a small retail business, Nature’s Way Health Foods on Route 1 in Stratford.

I commuted home from my UConn parents-paid-for education every weekend for the next four years to work in our very rapidly growing enterprise, and
after graduating with a magna cum laude Bachelor of Science Degree, to my Mother's overwhelming joy in her baby girl's accomplishment of which she had been so deprived, I joined my mother in her 60-80 hour/7 day workweek schedule at Nature's Way, a schedule which she and I together kept up for the following 3-1/2 decades as we co-grew, co-earned through our dedication and hard work, our little business up to the creation of a multi, multimillion dollar-valued body of assets. As Mom and I were totally dedicated to customer service, as Mom and I were I completely hands-on with both of us personally working on the retail floor in serving our beloved 300-plus per day customers, we trusted the backend work of accounting, bookkeeping, legal matters to trusted professionals, including lawyers, bookkeepers, CPA’s. What does any of this have to do with Judge Barbara Bellis? It has everything to do with everything of our Gray Family lives today from the actual realization by Mother & Daughter Gray of the Promise of the Great American Dream whereby anyone who, through beginning on the level playing field that being an American promises, can by hard work and dedication be rewarded with the accomplishment of success, through to suffering the reality that many of the American Promises as so crafted within our U.S. and State Constitutions are empty promises, most particularly, that the promises of Liberty and Justice for all and the promise of Rule of Law and the righteousness of the Judiciary and the Legal System of America --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Ms. Gray?

JERYL GRAY: Are so corrupted, are so devoid of actuality --

JERYL GRAY: As to render them unrecognizable from the intentions and crafting of their framers.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Ms. Gray. Let me ask you a couple of questions. Does, uh, what is the specific complaint you have with Judge Bellis?

JERYL GRAY: We are in the Bridgeport Superior Court, well I am for these past several years because as we all know, probate, my mother has been probate court imprisoned in Connecticut and our entire body of assets has been stripped from us and our homes, etc have been stripped. Now because you have to appeal something in a probate ruling in Superior Court, that is what my complaint is, the horrific experience that has taken place upon us in the Bridgeport Superior Court.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Has Judge Bellis presided over appeals from the probate court for your family's matters? Has she specifically ruled on cases?

JERYL GRAY: She, she, she has rulings within our case that are being appealed within, ours is now a municipal foreclosure case because our properties have been stripped from us via the probate actions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): And those appeals remain pending before the Appellate Court?

JERYL GRAY: There is one that is pending, yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Are there others that the Appellate Court has affirmed Judge Bellis' decisions?

JERYL GRAY: No.
REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Are there others where the Appellate Court has reversed Judge Bellis' decisions?

JERYL GRAY: Not Judge Bellis but her judges as being the administrator of the foreclosure court.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So other judges within the Judicial District of Bridgeport?

JERYL GRAY: Yes, under her administration, yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Okay. But, but not Judge Bellis' decisions in particular?

JERYL GRAY: I currently have an appeal against one of Judge Bellis' decisions in that court that's currently pending.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. So there's only been one appeal of a decision by Judge Bellis and that appeal remains pending?

JERYL GRAY: Currently, yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Thank you. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being with us Ms. Gray.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be Cynthia Lewis. Cynthia Lewis?

JERYL GRAY (READING FOR CYNTHIA LEWIS): Okay this says Judiciary Committee Public Meeting, RE: Opposition to Reappointment of Judge Barbara M. Bellis. Testimony of Cynthia Lewis: Victim of Deprivation of Life, Liberty and Property without due process guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. I, Cynthia Lewis, will speak my truth involving my personal encounters with Judge Barbara Bellis. While I don’t believe anything I or the others
testifying here today will make a difference because I believe the decision was predetermined, I will state my case for the record. The first time I came before Judge Bellis was in traffic court in 2005. The court was filled beyond capacity with me and others standing in the back of the courtroom and many standing outside the courtroom. My name was called. I approached the bench. I guess the man talking to Judge Bellis was an attorney. He told me I would be called again. I turned to leave and heard Judge Bellis yelling, "You get back here." At first, I didn’t realize she was yelling at me. Judge Bellis yelled again. As I turned around, Judge Bellis yelled again accusing me of using expletives in her court. I was confused and embarrassed. I said I did not cuss. I didn’t say a word. Judge Bellis continued to accuse me of cussing. I knew I did not cuss so I asked Judge Bellis what word did I use. She did not answer my question. The judge could not answer because she knew I had not cussed. I was allowed to leave. Finally, a seat became available in the front row of the court. Judge Bellis looked at me shook her head and rolled her eyes at me. I tried to keep my head down as much as possible. There was a Hispanic woman sitting next to me she kept talking. She even asked me to come and get her if her name was called. I just smiled and shook my head. I was there all day. At approximately 4:00 p.m. there were only four people waiting. There was a black man sitting on the opposite side of the court. On the side sitting behind me was a Mexican man and woman. They were talking off and on, but the judge said nothing. The black man made the mistake of yawning. Judge Bellis yelled "get him out of my court" to the Marshal. The black man was apologizing profusely to no avail.
I put my head down during this exchange. A pair of feet appeared right in front of me. I looked up and the Marshal said "she wants you out." I asked what I did. He shrugged his shoulders and waited for me to leave. I had witnessed three incidents with four black Americans of African descent where Judge Bellis has shown disparaging treatment against black Americans who were similarly situated as others of ethnicities. I later filed a discrimination complaint against her. In 2006 I was forced into a wrongful foreclosure by Wells Fargo Bank. Judge Bellis was not the presiding judge on my case. On one of my hearing dates. I noticed Judge Bellis name on the wall. I asked my attorney if she was on my case. She said no and asked why. I made the mistake of trusting my then attorney, Janine M. Becker, and told her about the incident with Judge Bellis. My next court hearing Judge Bellis was presiding over my case. My attorney neglected to inform me until it was time to enter the courtroom. My son and I stood to follow Ms. Becker into the courtroom but Ms. Becker said "wait out here." I asked why. Ms. Becker said Judge Bellis has the case; she doesn’t want you in the courtroom. Ms. Becker avoided my questions as to why this Judge was on my case, why I was barred from hearing my own case. I told Ms. Becker to motion for a recusal and change of venue. Ms. Becker was reluctant and discouraged against it at first. Days later, she agreed to file the motions. Of course it was denied. This case was going to trial, so I requested a jury trial. By 2011 the trial was on. At the time, my health problems were elevating. The doctors did not know what was wrong. I was not able to attend my trial because I was in the hospital. Ms. Becker called and was told I was in the Cardiac Unit sleeping.
Ms. Becker called back and asked me if I could come out the hospital tomorrow for the trial. After I was released. Ms. Becker offered two choices: Stay in the house for six months and move or file for bankruptcy. I contacted a bankruptcy attorney and she filed in 2011.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Ms. Gray, let me stop you. We're over. Ms. Lewis, are you willing and able to answer questions if the Committee has any or no? Okay. Are there questions from the Committee? Ms. Lewis, when you say you filed a discrimination complaint, who was that discrimination complaint filed with?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: Excuse me?

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): You said in your written statement that you filed a discrimination complaint against Judge Bellis?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: Yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Who was that complaint filed with?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: The Judiciary Committee. I'm not sure. I don't have it with me.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Somebody within the judicial branch or the CHRO or an email to somebody?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: I think it might have been the Disciplinary Committee. I'm not sure. I don't have the paper with me.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. The Disciplinary Committee? Okay. But you're, you're not positive about that?
CYNTHIA LEWIS: No. But I do have the documentation, but not here.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So do you know whether Judge Bellis in fact received a copy of that complaint or no?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: I have no way of knowing.


SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Just for clarity, is that the only complaint you filed?

CYNTHIA LEWIS: Yes. I was going to file this one here that I have now because the harassment continued.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions? Seeing none, thank you, ma'am. Next up is Albert Cuseo.

ALBERT CUSEO: Good morning.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Good morning.

ALBERT CUSEO: I am going to; I submitted a five-page testimony. I'm going to skip --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): We have that if you could summarize.

ALBERT CUSEO: To get to the most important parts. This testimony is in opposition to Judge Bellis. It relates to the court over which Judge Bellis currently presides as administrator, this being the Bridgeport Superior Court located at 1061 Main Street. After hearing Judge Bellis' earlier testimony she left out that she also sits on the Judges Judicial E-servicing Committee. I reviewed
her 2011 statements to that Committee relating to E-servicing and how they were rolling out a paperless docketing system. I believe Senator Kissel asked her questions at that time. My issues along with many of the other issues that you heard earlier relate to the due process. I have experienced Judge Bellis moving the cases forward and cherry-picking certain issues with each case as if for one example are motions to dismiss are heard in front of her. She denies them, in my case 100 percent of the time, and then she moves you down the hall to another judge to hear the rest of the matter thus causing a multiple appeal if an appeal if necessary. You have to get a transcript from the hearing with Judge Bellis and then you have to get a transcript of the hearing with the following judge which makes it very difficult. I experienced in some of the actions or failures by Judge Bellis regarding E-service. Judge Bellis is the judge that sits on the Advisory Committee for E-filing. Judge Bellis failed to schedule public meetings and the Committee has only had four meetings since 2014. The Judges Advisory Committee on E-filing has failed to hold public hearings and continues to neglect in keeping records of important information that is not transparent. Judge Bellis and some other judges use their knowledge of the system to violate the due process rights of parties by backdating judgements, backdating entries by their -- and backdating corrections. In my case, Judge Bellis backdated an entry, she placed an entry on real property that I was an owner of an LLC by placing an entry on the docket that the case was dismissed by eminent domain, that the property was lost by eminent domain by a sheet. I, I, I reviewed the situation with attorneys. They said I have to appeal the situation
because the property's going to transfer to the State of Connecticut. This is a very complicated case. I asked Judge Bellis to sit and preside over that case. She said she was too busy to keep the case and she passed it around to multiple attorneys.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So let me ask, sir. Did you in fact appeal that decision?

ALBERT CUSEO: Yes, I appealed that decision.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. And the appeal is pending?

ALBERT CUSEO: No, the appeal got dismissed because an entry was backdated as of March 28 and another attorney that has an ally with another judge backdated the correction to look to appear that it was corrected on the same date that the erroneous entry was placed on the docket that said the property was taken by eminent domain. I asked the clerk, Maryann, if this is possible, it seems like a mistake. She said it wasn’t a mistake. I asked who did it. She said Andrew in case flow. I asked Andrew in case flow is this some sort of mistake, I have to appeal this within 20 days. He said it was not a mistake, Judge Bellis did it. As of April 20 I have a printout of the docket sheet. There were no corrections on the docket. On May 5, Judge Bellis issued an order saying that the corrections were made prior. I did an FOIA request to determine exactly when the correction was backdated. They refused to give me the information. They said it was a security issue. It was not an attorney. It was a court employee that placed that correction on the docket. My appeal was subsequently dismissed claiming I filed a frivolous appeal. They dismissed the case because in the motion it claimed that I
knew that I filed a frivolous appeal because the correction was made the same day that the erroneous entry was made. The property that this involved is a multimillion property that has just recently been sold to a local Bridgeport developer. I lost my property because the E-service system was able to be manipulated and backdated and my appeal was wrongly dismissed based on the backdated information on the docket. I've experienced it now in --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Can I ask, so I'm looking, this is the case of Warren vs. Cuseo Family LLC?

ALBERT CUSEO: Correct.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. And you provided in your written, I haven't pulled the full docket but you provided in your written materials a screen shot of a portion of the docket.

ALBERT CUSEO: Yes. I have a copy.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So the entry which you're alleging says March 28, 2018, and then less than 20 days later than that on April 17, 2018, within the appeal period, it looks like you filed a motion for extension of time to file an appeal and to reargue the case?

ALBERT CUSEO: Yes, let me get to that.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Within the 20 days.

ALBERT CUSEO: Yes, I filed within the time. It wasn’t, my appeal didn’t get dismissed for failing to appeal on time.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay.
ALBERT CUSEO: My appeal got dismissed based on a motion to dismiss and a motion for sanctions because I filed a frivolous appeal.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So I guess what I'm trying to get at is this alleged backdating of the docket entry, how did that prejudice you?

ALBERT CUSEO: Entry 269.10 which says, and this is another, this is considered a correction, replace record to pleading status, keep point 2 and erase all higher key point dates. This language is not in the statute or is not in Practice Book rule and my goal of appealing was to get the erroneous entry administrative closure by eminent domain after a sheet removed from the docket so it wouldn’t negatively affect the value of the property which in the end, the property sold for 5, was forced to be sold for $500,000 dollars less than fair market even after I had investors willing and able to buy the property for $1.4 million dollars. The property ended up being sold to a local developer from Bridgeport after ex parte communications with the judge not --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Were you able to make that argument to the Appellate Court?

ALBERT CUSEO: No, my case was wrongfully dismissed.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): But not for lack of time?

ALBERT CUSEO: Not for lack of time. Based on that second entry that says if you go down to entry 276, there's an order from Judge Bellis, that order if you were pull it up would say order administrative closure by eminent domain matter after sheet has been corrected prior. So that entry was corrected but it wasn’t removed. I was looking to have that
entire entry removed because it was erroneously filed.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): All right but the docket correctly reflects the state of the matter after Judge Bellis' order in May.

ALBERT CUSEO: No because it shows the date of March 28. I have two printouts. I have a printout as of April 20 without the correction and then as of April 25, sometime between April 20 and April 25, this entry 269.10 was placed on the docket to appear it corrected the prior entry but it wasn't placed on the docket until after my appeal period would've run out so I was forced to appeal regardless.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being with us this morning, sir.

ALBERT CUSEO: Thank you. I would just like to say that I'm putting the judiciary on notice that the E-filing system is being used by multiple judges to backdate judgements and to give a false record.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Finally, I have signed up is Dan Lynch.

DAN LYNCH: Good morning.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Good morning, Mr. Lynch.

DAN LYNCH: I think it's still morning isn't it. I'm going to dispense with the prepared written remarks. I know you folks received testimony. Some of you have received email from me and candidly, to sit here with the daunting task of trying to convince you of something that seems unthinkable or unbelievable in three minutes is a pretty steep hill. Every two years the members of this Committee
are held accountable. I think very few of you, maybe with one exception, but very few of you run unopposed and just kind of get reelected year after year, you know term after term. Our Governor and other state-elected officials on a four-year cycle. Judges are given an eight-year critical job and I have no doubt that, I don't know the exact number between you know judges and workers' comp commissioners and you know the various titles that are used but you know upwards of 200 to 300 individuals go to work in the morning on behalf of you know the citizens of Connecticut to kind of adjudicate issues. I've been coming here for ten years and I can tell you with all sincerity, Judge Barbara Bellis is one of the few judges who should be referred for criminal prosecution by our Chief State's Attorney. We're not talking about a matter of a potential filing an appeal or filing a judicial grievance. This is a very smart individual with good education, a lot of time on the bench, very well connected within the bench and the Bar, and knows full well when she's taking actions within her courtroom, the impact it's going to have on litigants. I do not make any of these statements lightly. I do take offense when people suggest that complaints that have been filed over the last you know in the case of Judge Bellis I have since 2015 I have filed three Judicial Review complaints and she was also one of a number of people listed as a defendant both in her official and personal capacity in a federal lawsuit. And I would point out that that federal lawsuit was done with the blessing of the General Assembly, something that very few people can probably come here and state. So I don't have any magical powers to convince 180-some-odd members of the General Assembly you know that hey, Dan's a
good guy, you know, you should give him permission to sue the state or something. What has taken place at 1061 Main Street in Bridgeport is criminal over the last decade. Judge Barbara Bellis has played a very serious hand in that and she's also directed court personnel to participate in these activities and I'll stop. I recognize how this works and so.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Mr. Lynch, real quick. There's been reference earlier today to the specific complaints you filed, the specific Judicial Review Council complaints you filed. Do you want to just very, very briefly summarize those?

DAN LYNCH: Challenging as it is, I'll do my best. If I may I'll work backwards in time just because right now I can think about the ones that most recently occurred. Those of you who are members of the Bar recognize that there's some basics that apply when folks go to court. You know, I had zero legal experience when I first started interacting with our courts on the family side ten years ago, none. My experience in Judge Bellis' courtroom since 2010 is rife with a pattern of complete disrespect, certain litigants, not all litigants, and in my case I certainly felt it really from the beginning. I'm an individual who had grieved another judge, overturned a judge on appeal, a popular judge down there. I often had the feeling that I was certainly not welcome there but to get myself back on track, Representative Stafstrom, I apologize, and answer your question, the most recent grievance I filed was simply based on something that had happened to me a number of times in Judge Bellis' courtroom. I recognize judges have the opportunity to do something sua sponte, on the court's own volition and order somebody to address
an issue. I had to appear in court on December 20, 2018. I'm going to leave out a whole myriad of personal issues that I'm struggling with at the time and I'm told that I had to be in court that day to respond to a new lawsuit that's been filed commenced against me with respect to a property that I believed I still owned, went through foreclosure, it's a bit, it's a mess. I was told that day in court with minutes' notice, now I've got to address a different issue. Judge Bellis raises the issue as she's required now you know by the rules. As you heard today, you know, she talks about Rule 122 and she's got to mention that you know there's a lawsuit or a grievance pending and so forth. She only does that now because I've called her out on it in prior grievances but I will state that to be told with minutes' notice okay, well we're going do the issue of recusal. I wasn't there that day to deal with recusal. It could've been, you know the issue could've been, there's a lot of ways it could've been handled but to be ordered --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): So let me make sure I understand this. So the issue was you were there on another lawsuit unrelated to the one you had filed a Judicial Review Council complaint on. Judge Bellis was to hear something in that lawsuit and announced from the bench that she needed to recuse herself or take up the issue of whether she could recuse herself, should recuse herself?

DAN LYNCH: I want to make sure I understood what I heard and so I'm just going to take a deep breath. On December 20, 2018, I appeared in 1061 Main Street, Bridgeport as has been the case for ten years now. That matter was the first time I was appearing in person to respond to a complaint that
had been filed by the parties and there was an
attorney there, the people were there. They filed,
I forget exactly what it was called, apparently some
kind of a petition to remove a lien or something of
that and so I did what I've now learned I have to
do. I filed a motion to dismiss, I filed a
memorandum of law, and I filed an affidavit and I
went in and of course, we have to go appear before
the short calendar call, before Judge Bellis and as
part of that she did do as she's supposed to and you
know I mean there's three options that the judge,
the first thing that the judge has to do is at least
disclose that with respect to one of the parties --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Right.

DAN LYNCH: That there's a potential issue you know
and the rules sets forth and then there's options as
to how the judge needs to proceed. If I'm not
mistaken, I think it's one of three things; one,
they can recuse themselves but they're not required
to and I've never suggested they're required to.
Otherwise, people would just file grievances all the
time but the three options are either recusing
themselves, either hold a hearing as to the recusal
or refer the matter to another jurist who would hear
the matter of that judge's recusal and in that
instance, Judge Bellis chose to on the spot hold the
hearing on the recusal right then and there. That's
now why I was in court that day and the basic
tenants of due process require two things; one, an
opportunity to be heard and people often forget
about the rest of that sentence which is and an
opportunity to be prepared to present your case.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Let me and I, fortunately
I've never had this come up in my own practice but
is there some sort of Practice Book or statutory
requirement to provide notice of a certain amount of time before a recusal hearing because I mean it would seem that if you're in and you're appearing before a judge and there are some issues with that judge between the litigant, you and one of the options is recusal, wouldn’t the judge necessarily have to hear the recusal argument before proceeding to hearing the underlying merits of the matter that brings you before that judge?

DAN LYNCH: So I think I heard two questions there. The first I would give, the first question is there some type of rule and so forth and I suggest yes. The rule is called the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, due process, and the Appellate Court just recently took up this issue. There was a case of Morera vs. Thurber and I think it was February 12 or February 14 decision. Yet again, our Appellate Court reminding folks that you know even a couple of hours wasn’t sufficient enough time for somebody. Now, I have a history with the Bridgeport --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): And that was a recusal case?

DAN LYNCH: Oh, no, no, no. I didn’t mean to suggest it was a recusal case. In other words, I'm just talking about basic tenants of due process and so you know the matter wasn’t required before Judge Bellis. She chose to hear it herself and that was one of the options certainly that she has but I certainly have the absolute right you know to make sure that I'm prepared and then as a result of not being prepared, I misspoke as to the number of grievances or something and to this day I still don’t have a copy of the transcript or the audio for the hearing but I misspoke because I wasn’t prepared
and then I have to deal with the fact that well you know she's gotta correct me on the record in front of everybody saying well you know sir, there've been a lot more grievances. So then I have to go do more work and file a notice after the fact. I have never once filed any frivolous documents in a court, frivolous you know or wasteful grievances, but I have also never backed down from respectively asserting my rights and I'm sorry I've got to stay on track. I think I've lost track of what your other question was.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): No I think you addressed the point of what I was trying to get at. I was just trying to understand the timeline. Further questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you very much, Mr. Lynch. That concludes our signup list. Is there anyone else who has not had a chance to testify who would like to testify? Going once, going twice. So what we are going to do is we're actually going to recess. We'll hold the public hearing open. We're going to recess it briefly while members go into caucus and then we will close out the public hearing and open the Committee meeting after that so we are going to caucus where Mr. Clerk? Okay, Dems are 1A and Republicans are in 2A and caucus will begin immediately.