COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
JUDICIAL CONDUCT COMMISSION

ORDER OF PRIVATE REPRIMAND

The Commission issues this order of private reprimand to a Judge for violation of the Judicial Code of Conduct, SCR 4.300, Canon 1, Rule 1.1, and Canon 2, Rules 2.5 (A) and 2.15(B).

After receiving a complaint, the Commission conducted a preliminary investigation. The investigation showed that a Judge conditioned the setting aside of a guilty plea on the defendant's agreement to file a bar complaint against the defendant's attorney who the defendant alleged entered the plea on her behalf without her knowledge or consent. The Judge further threatened to hold the defendant in contempt unless the defendant followed the court's order to file the bar complaint.

The Commission concludes that the Judge violated SCR 4.020(1)(b)(i) by engaging in misconduct in office and that the Judge violated SCR 4.300 and the relevant portions of the following Rules of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

Canon 1, Rule 1.1 requires a judge to comply with the law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Canon 2, Rule 2.5(A) requires a judge to perform judicial duties competently and diligently. This duty of diligence in carrying out judicial office requires that judges perform duties imposed on them by law, including the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Canon 2, Rule 2.15(B) requires a judge who has knowledge that a lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question

regarding the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer or in other respects, to inform the appropriate authority.

Canon 2 is entitled "A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially, competently, and diligently" and governs how judges are to perform their duties. The judge conceded that it is an improper delegation of a judge's duty under this rule to require a party in a lawsuit to file a bar complaint instead of the judge performing his or her duty as required by this rule. This duty is directed to judges, as the Comment to Rule 2.15 states that "taking action to address known misconduct is a judge's obligation", and further states "[i]gnoring or denying known misconduct among … members of the legal profession undermines a judge's responsibility to participate in efforts to ensure public respect for the justice system." If the judge believed there was a violation of the Code of Professional Conduct, the judge must report it, and this rule does not permit a judge to require a defendant to file a bar complaint against his or her attorney as a condition of, or as a prerequisite for, the Judge's decision to set aside the defendant's guilty plea.

Based upon the foregoing conduct, the Judge is hereby privately reprimanded.

In issuing this private reprimand, the Commission duly considered that the Judge fully cooperated in the investigation, admitted the conduct, and has agreed to accept this Private Reprimand.

Date: 1/16/26

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CHAIR