

AUG 5 2026

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE****COURT OF JUDICIAL DISCIPLINE
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

IN RE:

Judge Jonathan M. Wilcox	:	
Magisterial District Judge	:	
Magisterial District 42-3-01	:	3 JD 2025
42 nd Judicial District	:	2 JD 2026
Bradford County	:	

**JUDICIAL CONDUCT BOARD'S BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED FINDINGS
OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

On October 10, 2025, and February 9, 2026, the Judicial Conduct Board (Board) filed a Complaint against Magisterial District Judge Jonathan M. Wilcox (Respondent). On June 2, 2026, the Board filed a Motion to Withdraw Counts 1 and 5 from the 2 JD 2026 Complaint. Thereafter, Counsel for Respondent filed a Stipulation and Waiver of trial in both matters.

I. Proposed Findings of Fact**Commonwealth v. CKR, MJ-42301-NT-307-2024 and Commonwealth v.
DMN, MJ-42301-NT-306-2024**

On January 23, 2025, DMN met with Respondent in his district court office regarding her and her paramour's cross-filed pending cases. DMN was the alleged victim of CKR's citation and CKR was the alleged victim of DMN's citation. DMN provided Respondent with her opened citation and her paramour's unopened citation. Respondent scheduled a meeting with DMN for the following day, January 24, 2025, at 11:00 AM to address the two (2) pending matters and gave DMN his personal cell phone number. After Respondent and DMN's January 23, 2025, meeting, Respondent texted DMN details about his personal life. The morning of January 24, 2025, DMN

texted Respondent and asked whether they should meet at a coffee shop or at his judicial office. Respondent texted in response "Meet me at the office as I want to go over the citations with you. I need to make things legitimate if you know what I mean. See you soon...." On January 24, 2025, Respondent dismissed CKR's case, *Commonwealth v. CKR*, MJ-42301-NT-307-2024. CKR was unaware he had been issued the citation. Respondent typed the following in the case notes for *Commonwealth v. CKR*, MJ-42301-NT-307-2024. "I spoke the victim of the crime. She stated that she did not want to pursue any charges against the defendant and vis versa. As neither party will testify the events of that day case dismissed. There is no need for the Trp to travel from his new station in Laporte to here for a case that will be dismissed. **jmw.**" (Grammatical and spelling errors in original). Respondent entered the following case notes for *Commonwealth v. DMN*, MJ-42301-NT-306-2024. "The Defendant spoke to me and state that she went to the police and never thought that they would file charges against her and the other party, her boyfriend. Defendant just wanted to report the situation but wanted nothing done by law enforcement. As neither one of them wants to testify against each other on these events. Therefore, this case along with the other case are being dismissed. There is no reason for the TRP to come from Laporte to have the charges dismissed at the hearing as parties are not going to testify against each other. **jmw.**" (Grammatical errors in original). Respondent never discussed the cases with the affiant, Trooper Jeremy Seabridge. CKR was unaware he was the victim of DMN's citation. Respondent instructed his staff to get rid of DMN and CKR's files and not to discuss his actions in the DMN matter with anyone and if they did, he would know they leaked the information. Respondent texted DMN numerous times between

January 23, 2025, and January 29, 2025, seeking to engage in a romantic relationship with DMN. In Respondent's last text message sent at 10:23 PM on January 29, 2025, he acknowledged he would be required to recuse from any matters involving DMN and CKR. Respondent dismissed DMN's case on May 19, 2025.

Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short

On November 4, 2022, Respondent issued a Commitment for the following traffic offenses, wherein he sentenced Ms. Short to serve a term of imprisonment of one-hundred-fifty-one (151) days from November 4, 2022, until April 4, 2023.

- a. MJ-42301-TR-658-2021
- b. MJ-42301-TR-659-2021
- c. MJ-42301-TR-660-2021
- d. MJ-42301-TR-661-2021
- e. MJ-42301-TR-662-2021
- f. MJ-42301-TR-490-2022
- g. MJ-42301-TR-491-2022
- h. MJ-42301-TR-492-2022
- i. MJ-42301-TR-493-2022
- j. MJ-42301-TR-571-2022
- k. MJ-42301-TR-572-2022
- l. MJ-42301-TR-573-2022
- m. MJ-42301-TR-574-2022
- n. MJ-42301-TR-575-2022

Respondent failed to hold a payment determination hearing prior to issuing the November 4, 2022, Commitment. On March 6, 2025, Respondent issued a second Commitment for the same dockets wherein he sentenced Ms. Short to a sentence of sixteen (16) days. Respondent failed to hold a payment determination hearing before issuing the March 6, 2025, Commitment. However, Ms. Short paid the remaining fines and costs and was released on March 10, 2025.

Letter in Support of Protection from Abuse Petition

On August 21, 2024, Respondent sent a letter on his judicial letterhead addressed to President Judge Maureen Beirne requesting that the Court grant his Clerk, SB's, Protection from Abuse Petition (PFA).

II. Discussion

Violations of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges:

Commonwealth v. CR, MJ-42301-NT-307-2024 and Commonwealth v. DN, MJ-42301-NT-306-2024

Respondent's conduct pursuant to the matters of *Commonwealth v. CKR* and *Commonwealth v. DMN* violated Rules 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.6, 2.9, 2.11 and 2.16 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

Canon 1, Rule 1.1. Compliance with the Law.

A magisterial district judge shall comply with the law including the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

Respondent committed the crime of obstructing the administration of law when he instructed his staff to get rid of DMN and CKR's citations.

Canon 1, Rule 1.2. Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary.

A magisterial district judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

When Respondent met with DMN prior to the hearing he failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety. By directing his staff to get rid of CKR's citation, Respondent failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety. Further, when Respondent dismissed CKR's citation after meeting with DMN he failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

Canon 1, Rule 1.3. Avoiding Abuse of the Prestige of Judicial Office.

A magisterial district judge shall not abuse the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the magisterial district judge or others, or allow others to do so.

Respondent abused the prestige of his judicial office when he pursued a relationship with DMN.

Canon 2, Rule 2.2. Impartiality and Fairness.

A magisterial district judge shall uphold and apply the law, and shall perform all duties of judicial office fairly and impartially.

Respondent failed to act with impartiality when he met with DMN and dismissed her and CKR's cases.

Canon 2, Rule 2.6. Ensuring the Right to be Heard.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall accord to every person or entity who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person or entity's lawyer or authorized representative, the right to be heard according to law.

Respondent failed to allow Trooper Seabridge a right to be heard prior to dismissing DMN and CKR's cases.

Respondent failed to allow CKR his right to be heard regarding his case and DMN's case where he was the alleged victim.

Canon 2, Rule 2.9. *Ex parte* Communications.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall not initiate, permit or consider *ex parte* communications, or consider other communications made to the magisterial district judge outside the presence of the parties or their lawyers or authorized representatives, concerning a pending or impending matter...

Respondent engaged in an *ex parte* communication when he met with DMN on January 23, 2025, and January 24, 2025, regarding her and CKR's pending cases.

Canon 2, Rule 2.11. Disqualification.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the magisterial district judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to the following circumstances:

- (1) The magisterial district judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party . . .**

Respondent failed to recuse from DMN's case after developing an affinity for DMN and sending her numerous text messages wherein he conveyed his feelings.

Canon 2, Rule 2.16. Cooperation with Disciplinary Authorities.

(B) A magisterial district judge shall not retaliate, directly or indirectly, against a person known or suspected to have assisted or cooperated with an investigation of a magisterial district judge or a lawyer.

Respondent violated this rule when he advised his staff not to discuss his actions in the DMN matter with anyone and if they did, he would know they had leaked the information.

Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short

Respondent's conduct pursuant to the *Commonwealth v. Hope M. Short* matter violated Rules 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

Canon 1, Rule 1.1. Compliance with the Law.

A magisterial district judge shall comply with the law including the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

Respondent failed to comply with the law when he failed to hold a payment determination hearing for Ms. Short prior to sentencing her to incarceration.

Canon 1, Rule 1.2. Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary.

A magisterial district judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

By sentencing Ms. Short to incarceration without a payment determination hearing, Respondent failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

Canon 2, Rule 2.2. Impartiality and Fairness.

A magisterial district judge shall uphold and apply the law, and shall perform all duties of judicial office fairly and impartially.

Respondent failed to uphold and apply the law when he sentenced Ms. Short to incarceration without a hearing as required under Rule 456 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Canon 2, Rule 2.5. Competence, Diligence and Cooperation.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently and diligently.

Respondent violated this rule when he sentenced Ms. Short to incarceration without a hearing as required under Rule 456 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Canon 2, Rule 2.6. Ensuring the Right to be Heard.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall accord to every person or entity who has a legal interest in a proceeding, or that person or entity's lawyer or authorized representative, the right to be heard according to law.

Respondent failed to allow Ms. Short her right to be heard when he sentenced her to a period of incarceration without a hearing on November 4, 2022, and March 6, 2025.

Letter in Support of Protection from Abuse Petition

Respondent's letter in support of a Protection from Abuse Petition violated Rules 1.2, 1.3 and 2.10 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.

Canon 1, Rule 1.2. Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary.

A magisterial district judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

By sending a letter of support of a Protection from Abuse Petition on his judicial letterhead, Respondent failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid the impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

Canon 1, Rule 1.3. Avoiding Abuse of the Prestige of Judicial Office.

A magisterial district judge shall not abuse the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interests of the magisterial district judge or others, or allow others to do so.

By sending a letter on his judicial letterhead on behalf of his Clerk to President Judge Beirne, Respondent abused the prestige of his judicial office.

Canon 2, Rule 2.10. Judicial Statements on Pending or Impending Cases.

(A) A magisterial district judge shall not make...any nonpublic statement that might substantially interfere with a fair trial or hearing.

By sending a letter on his judicial letterhead on behalf of his Clerk to President Judge Beirne, Respondent substantially interfered with a PFA hearing.

Violations of the Constitution:

Article V, §17(b), Pa. Const.

Justices and judges shall not engage in any activity prohibited by law and shall not violate any canon of legal or judicial ethics prescribed by the Supreme Court.

Respondent's violations of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges constitute automatic, derivative violations of Article V, §17(b) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which prohibits judges from violating any canon of judicial ethics prescribed by the Supreme Court. Therefore, Respondent's violations of Rules 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11 and 2.16 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, as discussed herein, constitute automatic derivative violations of Article V, §17(b) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Article V, §18(d)(1), Pa. Const.

A justice, judge or justice of the peace may be suspended, removed from office or otherwise disciplined for . . .conduct which brings the judicial office into disrepute, whether or not the conduct occurred while acting in a judicial capacity [.]

By engaging in the conduct set forth above, Respondent engaged in conduct that was so extreme that it brought the judicial office itself into disrepute and thereby constitutes a violation of the Disrepute Clause of Article V, §18(d)(1) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

III. Proposed Conclusions of Law

3 JD 2025

1. At Counts 1 and 2, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 1.1 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges regarding the matter of *Commonwealth v. DMN*

and *Commonwealth v. CKR*, in that he committed the crime of obstructing the administration of law when he directed his staff to get rid of DMN and CKR's citations and in the matter of *Commonwealth v. Hope M. Short* he failed to hold a payment determination hearing prior to sentencing her to incarceration.

2. At Counts 3 through 6, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 1.2 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges regarding the matter of *Commonwealth v. DMN* and *Commonwealth v. CKR* in that he failed to promote confidence in the judiciary and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety when he met with DMN prior to adjudication of her case, directed his staff to get rid of DMN and CKR's files, dismissed CKR's citation and in the matter of *Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short*, incarcerated her without a payment determination hearing.
3. At Count 7, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 1.3 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when he abused the prestige of his judicial office by pursuing a relationship with DMN, a litigant with a case pending in his office.
4. At Counts 8 and 9, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.2 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when in the matter of *Commonwealth v. DMN* and *Commonwealth v. CKR*, he failed to act with impartiality when he met with DMN and dismissed her and CKR's cases, and Respondent failed to uphold and apply the law in the matter of *Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short*, when

he sentenced Ms. Short to incarceration without a hearing as required under Rule 456 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure.

5. At Count 10, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.5 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when in the matter of *Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short*, he failed to perform judicial duties competently and sentenced Ms. Short to incarceration without first conducting a hearing regarding her ability to pay as required under Rule 456 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure.
6. At Counts 11 through 13, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.6 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when in the matters of *Commonwealth v. DMN* and *Commonwealth v. CKR* he denied Trooper Seabridge his right to be heard before dismissing the citations. Respondent denied CKR his right to be heard regarding his case and DMN's case wherein he was the alleged victim. In the matter of *Commonwealth v. Hope Michelle Short*, Respondent denied her right to be heard on November 4, 2022 and March 6, 2025, when he sentenced her to a period of incarceration without a hearing.
7. At Counts 14 and 15, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.9 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when in the matters of *Commonwealth v. DMN* and *Commonwealth v. CKR* he engaged he met with DMN on January 23, 2025 and January 24, 2025, regarding her pending case. Respondent violated this

rule when he met with DMN on January 23, 2025 and January 24, 2025, to discuss CKR's pending case.

8. At Count 16, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.16 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when he advised his staff not to discuss his actions in the DMN matter with anyone and if they did, he would know they had leaked the information.
9. At Counts 17 through 24, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Article V, §17(b) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a result of his violations of Rules 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.9 and 2.16 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.
10. At Count 25, the Board established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Article V, §18(d)(1) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by engaging in conduct that was so extreme it brought the judicial office itself into disrepute.

2 JD 2026

1. At Count 2, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 1.2 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when he sent a letter in support of a Protection from Abuse Petition on his judicial letterhead to President Judge Beirne.
2. At Count 3, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 1.3 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of

Magisterial District Judges when he sent a letter on judicial letterhead on behalf of his Clerk to President Judge Beirne.

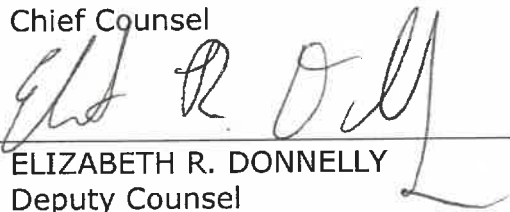
3. At Count 4, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Rule 2.10 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges when he sent a letter on his judicial letterhead on behalf of his Clerk to President Judge Beirne which substantially interfered with a Protection from Abuse hearing.
4. At Counts 6 through 8, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Article V, §17(b) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a result of his violations of Rules 1.2, 1.3 and 2.10 of the Rules Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges.
5. At Count 9, the Board has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent violated Article V, §18(d)(1) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by engaging in conduct that was so extreme it brought the judicial office itself into disrepute.

Respectfully submitted,

MELISSA L. NORTON
Chief Counsel

DATE: August 5, 2026

BY:


ELIZABETH R. DONNELLY
Deputy Counsel
Pa. Supreme Court ID No. 308085
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VERIFICATION

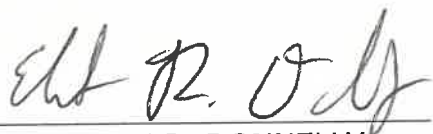
I, Elizabeth R. Donnelly, Deputy Counsel to the Judicial Conduct Board, verify that the statements made in the attached Brief in Support of Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are true and correct. I understand that the statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann. § 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Respectfully submitted,

MELISSA L. NORTON
Chief Counsel

DATE: August 5, 2026

By:


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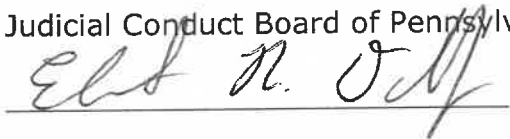
**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I certify that this filing complies with the provisions of the *Case Records Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania* that require filing confidential information and documents differently than non-confidential information and documents.

Submitted by:	Judicial Conduct Board of Pennsylvania
Signature:	
Name:	Elizabeth R. Donnelly Deputy Counsel
Attorney No.:	308085

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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PROOF OF SERVICE

In compliance with Rule 122 of the Court of Judicial Discipline Rules of Procedure, on the date below a copy of the Board's Brief in Support of Proposed Findings and Conclusions of Law was sent by UPS Overnight Mail to William A. Hebe, Esquire, counsel for Magisterial District Judge Jonathan M. Wilcox at the following address:

William A. Hebe, Esquire
Spencer, Gleason, Hebe & Rague, P.C.
17 Central Avenue
Wellsboro, PA 16901

Respectfully submitted,

DATE: August 5, 2026

BY:


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