

**STATE OF MARYLAND**

**BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES**

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

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**THE HONORABLE JOSEPH L. WRIGHT**

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**Case No. CJD 2016-148**

**Judge of the District Court of  
Maryland for Prince George's County**

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**PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

Pursuant to Charges filed by Investigative Counsel, the response filed by Judge Joseph L. Wright, ("Judge Wright") and prior written notice of the hearing to Judge Wright, the above-entitled matter came in for a public hearing in Annapolis ("Hearing"), as authorized by Md. Rule 18-407(a), (b), (c), (d) and (i), on August 20, 2018, before the Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities ("Commission"). Derek Bayne, Esq., Assistant Investigative Counsel, prosecuted the matter against Judge Wright. Judge Wright was present at the Hearing and represented by William C. Brennan, Esq.

The following Commission Members participated in the Hearing: Honorable Michael W. Reed, Chair; Vernon Hawkins, Jr.; Honorable Susan H. Hazlett; Arielle F. Hinton, Esq.; Kimberly Howell; Richard M. Karceski, Esq.; Honorable Robert B. Kershaw; Susan J. Matlick; Sally McLane Young Ridgely; and Marisa A. Trasatti, Esq. The ten (10) Commission Members present at the Hearing constituted a quorum, pursuant to Md. Rule 18-402(e).

The Commission specifically finds that the Hearing was conducted according to the rules, statutes, and procedures required by law. Upon private deliberations immediately

following the Hearing, the Commission considered all of the exhibits admitted into evidence, and the sworn testimony of witnesses, including Judge Wright, at the Hearing.

As more fully set forth herein, the Commission finds, by clear and convincing evidence, that Judge Wright has committed sanctionable conduct. The vote of the Commission Members as to the finding of sanctionable conduct was nine (9) to one (1). The vote as to the recommendation of appropriate discipline was unanimous with one (1) abstention. The Commission hereby issues a Public Reprimand, pursuant to Md. Rule 18-407(j), to Judge Joseph L. Wright and in support states as follows:

1. Judge Wright was, at all times applicable to the allegations contained in the Charges, an Associate Judge of the District Court for Prince George's County. Therefore, the Commission has both subject matter jurisdiction over the above-entitled case and personal jurisdiction over Judge Wright, all pursuant to Md. Constitution, Article 4, Sections 4A and 4B, and Md. Rules 18-401, *et seq.*

2. Judge Wright applied for an open position on the bench for the Circuit Court for Prince George's County by submitting a Personal Confidential Data Questionnaire ("PDQ") on July 13, 2016.

3. Prior to Judge Wright's submission of the PDQ, Judge Wright was subject to discipline by the Commission on Judicial Disabilities by way of a Private Reprimand in CJD 2014-109 which was consented to and executed by Judge Wright, his counsel, and the Chair of the Commission on Judicial Disabilities in December, 2015.

4. Judge Wright failed to disclose the prior discipline as requested and required in the PDQ.

5. Judge Wright did not contest the authenticity or veracity of the Private

Reprimand or PDQ at the Hearing.

**CONCLUSION**

1. The Commission finds, by clear and convincing evidence, Judge Wright’s conduct constitutes sanctionable conduct as defined in Md. Rule 18-401(k)(1), specifically finding Judge Wright committed misconduct in office. The Commission also finds Judge Wright in violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct, Md. Rule 18-101.2(a) which requires judges to “act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary.”

2. As to the appropriate discipline, the Commission is guided by the General Provisions of the Maryland Code of Judicial Conduct, Md. Rule 18-100.1(b)(1)(B), which provides:

Whether discipline should be imposed should be determined through a reasonable and reasoned application of the Rules and should depend upon factors such as the seriousness of the transgression, the facts and circumstances at the time of the transgression, the extent of any pattern of improper activity, whether there have been previous violations, and the effect of the improper activity upon the judicial system or others.

3. After due consideration, the Commission, pursuant to Md. Rule 18-407(j), concludes that a Public Reprimand is the appropriate disposition under the circumstances.

4. The Commission believes that this sanction is commensurate with the gravity of Judge Wright’s conduct and will sufficiently impress upon Judge Wright the fundamental requirements of the Maryland Code of Judicial Conduct.

**IT IS SO FOUND** by the Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities.

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The Honorable Michael W. Reed, Chair

9/24/18  
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Date