

IN THE MATTER  
OF THE HONORABLE  
JENNIFER ETHERIDGE

\*  
\* IN THE  
\*  
\* SUPREME COURT  
\*  
\* OF MARYLAND  
\*  
\* JD No. 1  
\*  
\* September Term, 2024  
\*  
O R D E R

Upon consideration of the parties' agreement for discipline by consent under Rule 18-436, it is this 27th day of January 2025, by the Supreme Court of Maryland,

ORDERED that the agreement for discipline by consent is approved and, as provided in that agreement, the Honorable Jennifer Etheridge is suspended from judicial duties without pay for 20 days, with all but five days of the suspension suspended and subject to Judge Etheridge's satisfaction of the corrective and remedial actions described in paragraph 10 of the agreement<sup>1</sup> for discipline by consent.



/s/ Matthew J. Fader  
Chief Justice

\*Justice Watts did not participate in the consideration of this matter.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the agreement for discipline states that the corrective and remedial actions to be taken by Judge Etheridge are in paragraph 11 of the agreement, in fact they are in paragraph 10 of the agreement.

**STATE OF MARYLAND**

**BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES**

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

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**CJD 2023-077**

**JUDGE JENNIFER ETHERIDGE**

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**AGREEMENT FOR DISCIPLINE BY CONSENT**

The Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities (hereinafter the "Commission") and Judge Jennifer Etheridge, Associate Judge, District Court of Maryland for Baltimore City (hereinafter "Judge Etheridge"), by and through her counsel, Steven D. Silverman, Esquire & Alvin I. Frederick, Esquire, and pursuant to Maryland Rule 18-436, hereby enter into this Agreement for Discipline by Consent (hereinafter the "Agreement") and state as follows:

1. On October 27, 2024, at a duly constituted regular meeting of the Commission, the Commission Members, pursuant to Maryland Rule 18-431, made a finding of probable cause to believe that Judge Jennifer Etheridge committed sanctionable conduct in the above-captioned case. The Commission directed Investigative Counsel to initiate proceedings against Judge Etheridge by filing with the Commission Charges that she had committed sanctionable conduct.
2. On November 22, 2024, Investigative Counsel filed Charges in the above-captioned case. A copy of the Charges is attached to this Agreement as Exhibit A.
3. Judge Etheridge admits to the conduct in the Charges/Exhibit A and specifically admits to the following:

- a. On or about September 2, 2023, Officers from the Baltimore City Police Department ("BCPD") responded to a 911 call for service related to a domestic incident in the Fell's Point neighborhood of Baltimore. During their handling of the domestic incident, one or both officers observed a woman later identified as Judge Etheridge fall on the sidewalk, heard glass breaking as a result of the fall, and observed her bag to be leaking. After receiving confirmation from the woman that she was not seriously injured, the officers returned their attention to the domestic incident.
- b. Judge Etheridge later approached the officers while they were still handling the domestic incident. She was carrying her cell phone and a set of keys with a gavel keychain. Judge Etheridge explained that she was in an "Uber" and that the vehicle was denied access to her street by a Baltimore City municipal employee even though she presented her driver's license to the employee to prove her residence. Judge Etheridge asked one of the officers to speak to the individual who denied her access and instruct that individual to let residents in with proper identification. The officer agreed to do so. Judge Etheridge repeatedly described her having been denied access as inappropriate and explained that she fell on the sidewalk because she was forced to walk to her house rather than be dropped off at her house. She also stated, "I'm part of the criminal justice system. I understand this. I was a State's Attorney for 17 years. I understand this."

- c. Judge Etheridge continued to engage the officers regarding the denial of access. At one point, Judge Etheridge pointed at one of the officers before starting to walk away whereupon the following exchange occurred:

Judge Etheridge: I got it. Believe me I'll remember you.  
No, no, no, it's fine. When I see you in court, I'll remember you. And it's fine.

Officer: In court for what?

Judge Etheridge: For anything.

- d. At one point during the incident, Judge Etheridge pulled a card from the exterior pocket attached to her cell phone, displayed the card to the officer, and stated, "It's not my first time in the criminal justice system, okay? There we go." The card identified Judge Etheridge as a judge and was later confirmed to be Judge Etheridge's Maryland Judiciary business card. At the end of the discussion, the officer again agreed to speak to the Baltimore City municipal employee stationed at the end of the street and Judge Etheridge returned to her home.
- e. En route to speak to the individuals at the end of the street, one of the officers observed glass from a broken wine bottle in the area where Judge Etheridge had previously fallen.
- f. Both officers believed Judge Etheridge to have been intoxicated and noted the presence of alcohol on her breath during their encounter. Judge Etheridge acknowledged consuming two (2) vodka martinis on the day of the encounter but denied that she was intoxicated.

- g. The interaction between Judge Etheridge and the responding BCPD officers was captured on body worn cameras and was the subject of an Incident Report filed by the responding officers with the BCPD. Following review of the Incident Report and the body worn camera footage by a superior officer, a complaint was filed against Judge Etheridge with the Commission.**
- h. After receipt of the complaint, the Commission, through its Investigative Counsel, Tanya C. Bernstein, Esquire, investigated the complaint. Judge Etheridge was notified of the nature of the investigation and afforded an opportunity to present information bearing on the same. Judge Etheridge did so.**
- i. The results of and materials obtained during the investigation were submitted to the Judicial Inquiry Board ("Board") for its review and consideration, including but not limited to, the complaint and attachments; body worn camera footage from the BCPD; documents received from the BCPD, including Calls for Service Report, Incident History Detail, Incident Report, and related photographs; the response to the investigation submitted by Judge Etheridge, through counsel; and the report and recommendation of Investigative Counsel.**
- j. Judge Etheridge admits that her response to Investigative Counsel was problematic in the following ways:**

1. Judge Etheridge's statements concerning the mode of transportation taken to her home on September 2, 2023 were not consistent. Judge Etheridge initially told the police officer she had an "Uber driver." In her response to Investigative Counsel, however, the judge stated a friend drove her home.
2. Although Judge Etheridge signed her response to Investigative Counsel, the judge did not verify the accuracy of documents submitted on her behalf. She failed to detect and correct an erroneous statement in a footnote; the statement invoked the tragic death of Judge Andrew Wilkinson stating: "With the Judge Wilkinson tragedy on her mind, and because she was walking alone at midnight, Judge Etheridge chose the route that she thought was the safest..." Judge Wilkinson's death occurred on October 19, 2023, more than six (6) weeks after the incident involving Judge Etheridge on September 2, 2023. Judge Etheridge later expressed this statement was submitted by counsel on her behalf.
4. The Board issued a report and recommended that the Commission find probable cause to believe that Judge Etheridge committed sanctionable conduct. The Board further recommended to the Commission that Investigative Counsel be directed to initiate proceedings against Judge Etheridge by filing Charges alleging the judge committed sanctionable conduct.
5. In response to the Board Report, Judge Etheridge admitted her prior response to Investigative Counsel was problematic in that she lacked awareness of her conduct,

did not acknowledge her conduct, and failed to show any remorse for her actions. Judge Etheridge also acknowledged her responsibility to verify the accuracy of all documents submitted on her behalf to the Commission.

6. Judge Etheridge's conduct reflected negatively on the judge and the judiciary and violated the Maryland Code of Judicial Conduct, specifically Rules 18-101.1 (Compliance with the Law), 18-101.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), 18-101.3 (Avoiding Lending the Prestige of Judicial Office), 18-102.10 (Judicial Statements on Pending and Impending Cases), 18-102.16(a) (Cooperation with Disciplinary Authorities), and 18-103.1(d) & (e) (Extra-Official Activities in General).
7. After the issuance of the Judicial Inquiry Board Report recommending the Commission direct Investigative Counsel to file Charges, Judge Etheridge, through counsel, initiated negotiations with Investigative Counsel and the Commission for a consent disposition pursuant to Rule 18-436(b).
8. Judge Etheridge agrees and consents to the following Sanction:
  - a. The issuance of a Suspension without pay for twenty (20) days, suspend all but five (5) days of the Suspension; and
  - b. Successful completion of the corrective or remedial action described in paragraph 11, *infra*.

The Suspension and corrective or remedial action shall constitute the Sanction, and shall serve as discipline for the conduct described herein.

9. The Commission agrees that the issuance of a Suspension and successful completion of the corrective and remedial action described in paragraph 11, *infra*, is the appropriate disposition in this matter.

10. The corrective and remedial action described below shall include:

- a. Completion of any and all training and education courses as determined by the Commission;
- b. Meeting as directed with a Mentor Judge to be selected by the Commission for a period of one (1) year and waiving confidentiality for purposes of (a) the Commission and a Monitor chosen by the Commission discussing with the Mentor Judge the terms and goals of the mentor/mentee relationship; (b) the Commission providing to the Mentor Judge, subject to a confidentiality agreement signed by the Mentor Judge, all information obtained during the investigation as well as evaluation and treatment reports, which are/will be contained in the Commission's files; (c) the Mentor Judge providing monthly reports to the Commission and/or the Monitor on the status of the mentorship and Judge Etheridge's cooperation therewith; and (d) the Monitor providing monthly reports, on or before the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) day, to the Commission on the status of Judge Etheridge's compliance with the terms of this agreement;
- c. Judge Etheridge and Investigative Counsel shall identify an Evaluator to the Commission for approval within ten (10) days of the Supreme Court of Maryland's approval of this agreement. Judge Etheridge shall meet



with the Evaluator within thirty (30) days of the Commission's approval. Judge Etheridge shall meet as directed with the Evaluator, to conduct a substance abuse evaluation (for example, MAST) of the judge. The Evaluator shall issue a report with recommendations, if applicable. Judge Etheridge shall follow and complete any and all treatment recommendations of the Evaluator, if any. If the Evaluator issues treatment recommendations, the Treatment Provider shall submit monthly reports to the Monitor regarding Judge Etheridge's progress and compliance with the treatment recommendations. The Treatment Provider, if any, shall submit a final report to the Monitor certifying Judge Etheridge's successful completion of the treatment recommendations. All costs for the Evaluator (including reports), evaluation, Treatment Provider (including reports), and completing the treatment recommendations shall be paid by Judge Etheridge.

d. Issuing written letters of apology to the Complainant, the two officers with whom Judge Etheridge interacted on September 2, 2023, and the Baltimore City municipal employee with whom Judge Etheridge interacted on September 2, 2023.

11. The Commission, in its sole discretion, may extend the terms of the corrective and remedial action described herein up to an additional one (1) year.

12. Judge Etheridge agrees to execute any authorization within three (3) days of a request from the Commission and/or the Monitor to obtain information and/or

- documents necessary to confirm compliance with the terms of this Agreement.
13. If Judge Etheridge fails to fully serve the Suspension and/or fails to comply with any of the corrective or remedial action described in paragraph 11, *supra*, the Commission may request that the Supreme Court of Maryland order the judge to serve the remaining fifteen (15) day suspension without pay.
  14. Upon notification from the Monitor to the Commission that Judge Etheridge has satisfied the Suspension as well as the corrective or remedial action described in paragraph 11, *supra*, for the duration of this agreement and any extension, the Commission shall terminate the proceedings and the matter shall be closed.
  15. Judge Etheridge waives her right to further proceedings before the Commission and to subsequent proceedings before the Supreme Court of Maryland relating to the Sanction. Judge Etheridge waives all right to challenge or dispute the matter and the Sanction and waives all other rights available to her in connection with the matter and the Sanction.
  16. Judge Etheridge agrees that this Agreement, attachment(s), and the Sanction may be admitted in any subsequent disciplinary proceeding against the judge if relevant.
  17. Judge Etheridge understands and agrees that the Suspension and/or a Notice of Suspension is not confidential and may be placed on the Commission's website at the sole discretion of the Commission. The Charges will also be posted on the Commission's website along with a timely submitted Response to charges, if any, submitted by the judge.


18. Judge Etheridge, and any attorney that is or has represented Judge Etheridge in connection with this matter (hereinafter "Judge Etheridge's attorney" or "her attorney") acknowledge and agree that materials received from the Commission, regardless of format (hereinafter "confidential materials") are, and always will be, strictly confidential. No later than five (5) days after Judge Etheridge is notified by the Commission that she has fully satisfied the requirements of this Agreement, Judge Etheridge and her attorney(s) shall (a) return all confidential materials to the Commission (including any copies of confidential materials); (b) shall delete all confidential materials from any electronic device and cloud storage platforms they have used during the pendency of the Agreement; and (c) provide written verification to the Commission that the confidential materials have not been disseminated, and that all confidential materials (and copies thereof) have been returned and deleted from electronic devices and cloud storage platforms. Judge Etheridge and her attorney shall not copy, release, publish, post, or otherwise disseminate confidential materials at any time. In the event that Judge Etheridge substantially fails to abide by the requirements of this paragraph, Investigative Counsel may, in their discretion, initiate an investigation of Judge Etheridge.
19. Judge Etheridge enters into this Agreement and consents to the provisions recited herein, including the Sanction, freely and voluntarily.
20. Pursuant to Maryland Rule 18-436(c), this Agreement shall be submitted to the Supreme Court of Maryland ("Court"), which shall either approve or reject the Agreement. The Agreement shall be confidential and privileged until approved by


the Court. If the Court approves this Agreement and imposes the Sanction, the Agreement and any attached exhibit(s) shall be made public as required by Rule 18-436(c). If the Court rejects the Agreement and Sanction, the proceedings before the Commission shall resume as if no Agreement had been reached.

Attachment: Exhibit A - Charges

**AGREED TO BY:**

  
Judge Jennifer Etheridge  
District Court for Baltimore City

  
Alvin I. Frederick, Esquire  
Counsel for Judge Etheridge

  
Honorable Anne K. Albright, Chair  
Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities

Received By Commission

STATE OF MARYLAND

NOV 22 2024

BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES ~~OF THE~~ Judicial Disabilities

IN THE MATTER OF: \*  
\* CJD 2023-077  
\*  
JUDGE JENNIFER ETHERIDGE

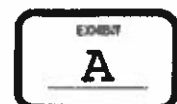
To: JUDGE JENNIFER ETHERIDGE  
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR BALTIMORE CITY  
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

**CHARGES**

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Commission on Judicial Disabilities (hereinafter "Commission") has caused to be made and completed an investigation, through its Investigative Counsel, Tanya C. Bernstein, Esq., of Judge Jennifer Etheridge (hereinafter sometimes referred to as "the judge"), who was, at all pertinent times, a Judge of the District Court of Maryland for Baltimore City. The Commission notified Judge Etheridge of the nature of the investigation and afforded the judge an opportunity to present information bearing on the subject of the investigation.

The Commission has received and considered information from the investigation, including, but not limited to: the complaint and its attachments; body worn camera footage, documents, reports, and other materials and information received from the Baltimore City Police Department; the judge's response to the investigation; the report and recommendation of Investigative Counsel; the Report of the Judicial Inquiry Board; and the judge's response to the Report of the Judicial Inquiry Board.

In consideration of the foregoing and a finding by the Commission of probable cause to believe that Judge Etheridge has committed sanctionable conduct, the Commission directed Investigative Counsel to initiate formal proceedings against Judge Etheridge pursuant to Rule 18-



431(a). The Commission will conduct a public hearing on these charges pursuant to Rule 18-434.

The Commission states as follows in support of its probable cause determination:

1. Judge Etheridge has served as a Judge of the District Court of Maryland for Baltimore City since May 2012.
2. Based upon a complaint received, the Commission's Investigative Counsel opened an investigation regarding Judge Etheridge's conduct.
3. The investigation revealed sanctionable conduct by Judge Etheridge. The nature of the sanctionable conduct that is the subject of these charges includes confronting law enforcement to advance her personal interests while officers were addressing an unrelated domestic dispute; invoking her judicial title during the interaction with law enforcement; threatening to take future action against the officers as a result of the interaction and otherwise exhibiting antagonistic and confrontational behavior; failing to cooperate and be candid and honest with disciplinary authorities, to include disingenuously invoking the subsequent death of another judicial officer as justification for her behavior, failing to acknowledge her conduct or express remorse for the same, and making inconsistent statements regarding her conduct; failing to comply with the law; and otherwise engaging in behavior unbecoming a judicial officer and in direct contravention of her responsibility to promote confidence in the Judiciary and to maintain the dignity of judicial office.
4. Judge Etheridge's conduct was in violation of Rules 18-101.1 (Compliance with the Law), 18-101.2 (Promoting Confidence in the Judiciary), 18-101.3 (Avoiding

lending the prestige of judicial office), 18-102.10 (Judicial Statements on Pending and Impending Cases), 18-102.16 (a) (Cooperation with Disciplinary Authorities), and 18-103.1 (d) & (e) (Extra-Official Activities in General).

The pertinent provisions of the Rules provide as follows:

**RULE 18-101.1. COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW**

A judge shall comply with the law, including this Code of Judicial Conduct.

**RULE 18-101.2. PROMOTING CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY**

- (a) **Promoting public confidence.** – A judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary.
- (b) **Avoiding perception of impropriety.** – A judge shall avoid conduct that would create in reasonable minds a perception of impropriety.

**RULE 18-101.3. AVOIDING LENDING THE PRESTIGE OF JUDICIAL OFFICE.**

A judge shall not lend the prestige of judicial office to advance the personal or economic interest of the judge or others, or allow others to do so.

**RULE 18-102.10. JUDICIAL STATEMENTS ON PENDING AND IMPENDING CASES.**

- (a) A judge shall abstain from public comment that relates to a proceeding pending or impending in any court and that might reasonably be expected to affect the outcome or impair the fairness of that proceeding and shall require similar abstention on the part of court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control. This Rule does not prohibit a judge from making public statements in the course of official duties or from explaining for public information the procedures of the court.
- (b) With respect to a case, controversy, or issue that is likely to come before the court, a judge shall not make a commitment, pledge, or promise that is inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office.
- (c) Notwithstanding the restrictions in sections (a) and (b) of this Rule, a judge may make public statements in the course of official duties, may explain court

procedures, and may comment on any proceeding in which the judge is a litigant in a non-judicial capacity.

**RULE 18-102.16 (a). COOPERATION WITH DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITIES**

- (a) A judge shall cooperate and be candid and honest with judicial and attorney disciplinary agencies.

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**RULE 18-103.1 (d) & (e). EXTRA-OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL**

Except as prohibited by law or this Code, a judge may engage in extrajudicial activities.

When engaging in extrajudicial activities, a judge shall not:

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- (d) engage in conduct that would appear to a reasonable person to be coercive; or
- (e) make inappropriate use of court premises, staff, stationery, equipment, or other resources.

5. The specific facts upon which these charges are based are summarized as follows:

*(i) Misconduct Related to Interaction with Law Enforcement*

On September 2, 2023, two (2) officers from the Baltimore City Police Department responded to a 911 call for domestic violence. The officers were equipped with body worn cameras which were activated and recording during the entire call for service. While handling the domestic incident, the officers heard glass shatter on the street and saw a woman on the ground and broken bottle(s) of alcohol. The woman, who was subsequently identified as Judge Etheridge, was returning from a gathering with friends during which she had consumed at least two (2) alcoholic beverages. One of the officers inquired as to whether Judge Etheridge was okay, while the other officer continued to handle the domestic



incident. Upon Judge Etheridge's assurance that she was "fine", the officers returned their attention to the domestic incident. Shortly thereafter, Judge Etheridge returned to the scene and interrupted the officers while they continued to handle the domestic incident. She was carrying her cell phone and a set of keys with a gavel keychain. Judge Etheridge expressed her irritation that a municipal truck was blocking her residential street and had denied access to her "Uber" driver. She asked the officers to speak to the municipal employee(s) and instruct them to let residents pass with proper identification. One of the officers agreed to do so and continued to engage with Judge Etheridge while the other officer handled the domestic incident.

Judge Etheridge repeatedly argued that the denial of access was inappropriate and that her fall and injury were a direct result of being forced to walk to her house rather than being driven to her door. Judge Etheridge declined medical attention, stating, "No. But it's not alright. I'm just letting you know. It's inappropriate. I should not have been injured this way. I should not have been made to walk to my house. I live here." She also stated, "I'm part of the criminal justice system. I understand this. I was a State's Attorney for 17 years. I understand this."

The interaction continued until Judge Etheridge pointed at the officer before starting to walk away, whereupon the following exchange occurred:

Judge Etheridge: I got it. Believe me I'll remember you. No, no, no, it's fine. When I see you in court, I'll remember you. And it's fine.  
Officer: In court for what?  
Judge Etheridge: For anything.

Thereafter, Judge Etheridge pulled out her Maryland Judiciary business card and extended her arm to display it to the officer while threatening, "It's not my first time in the criminal justice system, okay? There we go."

Further discussion ensued with Judge Etheridge insisting that she should not have had to walk home and that residents should be allowed to drive on the street. The officer again agreed to speak to the municipal employee(s) stationed at the end of the street. As Judge Etheridge walked away she stated, "If I die, it is what it is." En route to speak to the municipal employee as promised, one of the officers observed glass from a broken wine bottle in the area where Judge Etheridge had previously fallen. Both officers believed Judge Etheridge to have been intoxicated and noted the presence of alcohol on her breath during their encounter. One of the officers also expressed this belief to the municipal employee and told the employee, "She said she'd see me in court."

*(ii) Lack of Cooperation and Candor with Disciplinary Authorities*

Judge Etheridge failed to cooperate and be candid and honest with Investigative Counsel and the Commission. Judge Etheridge's written response to the investigation, which was drafted by counsel and signed by Judge Etheridge, was evasive, disingenuous, and insincere. Judge Etheridge lacked awareness or acknowledgement of her conduct and failed to show remorse for the same. Instead, Judge Etheridge made multiple attempts to shift the blame for her conduct to others – first to the municipal employee blocking the street and then to the officer(s). Inexplicably, Judge Etheridge also attempted to deflect

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responsibility for her actions on September 2, 2023, by invoking the tragic death of Judge Andrew Wilkinson that occurred six (6) weeks later on October 19, 2023, stating, "With the Judge Wilkinson tragedy on her mind, and because she was walking alone at midnight, Judge Etheridge chose the route that she thought was the safest and would minimize any interactions with individuals who could recognize her as a judge." Additionally, Judge Etheridge was inconsistent and dishonest in her statements regarding her mode of transportation on the date at issue by repeatedly stating to the officers that she had been in an Uber when her subsequent written response to the investigation reflected that a friend had driven her home that evening.

6. Judge Etheridge's behavior provides evidence that she engaged in conduct prejudicial to the proper administration of justice in Maryland Courts, pursuant to the Maryland Constitution, Article IV, Section 4B(b)(1).

**\*SIGNATURES ON FOLLOWING PAGE\***

These charges are issued by Investigative Counsel at the direction of the Commission on  
Judicial Disabilities.

**COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES**

Date: November 22, 2024

*Tanya C. Bernstein*

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Tanya C. Bernstein  
Director/Investigative Counsel

Date: November 22, 2024

*Derek A. Bayne*

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Derek A. Bayne  
Deputy Assistant Investigative Counsel

Date: November 22, 2024

*Tamara S. Dowd*

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Tamara S. Dowd  
Assistant Investigative Counsel

**NOTICE:** YOU HAVE THE RIGHT, PURSUANT TO RULE 18-431(d) OF THE MARYLAND RULES, TO FILE A WRITTEN RESPONSE WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS AFTER SERVICE OF THESE CHARGES. YOU MUST FILE EITHER AN ORIGINAL AND ELEVEN (11) COPIES OF THE RESPONSE OR AN ELECTRONIC COPY PURSUANT TO RULE 18-404. THE RESPONSE SHOULD BE FILED WITH THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL DISABILITIES WITH A COPY TO INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL.