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BEFORE THE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

- - -

In re: :
Complaint against :
Hon. Leslie Ann : Case No. 2024-024
Celebrezze, :
Respondent, :
Disciplinary Counsel, :
Relator. :

- - -

REMOTE VIDEOCONFERENCE HEARING

- - -

Monday, March 31, 2025

10:12 a.m. EDT

- - -

BEFORE HEARING PANEL MEMBERS:

Hon. Rocky A. Coss, Chair
Margaret M. Murray, Esq.
Kurt A. Kaufman, Esq.

- - -

RIFFLE REPORTING SERVICE



1 APPEARANCES:

2 ON BEHALF OF THE RELATOR:

3 Joseph M. Caligiuri, Esq.
4 Disciplinary Counsel
5 Jay R. Wampler, Esq.
6 Assistant Disciplinary Counsel
7 65 East State Street, Suite 1510
8 Columbus, Ohio 43215
9 (614) 387-9700
10 Joseph.Caligiuri@odc.ohio.gov
11 Jay.Wampler@odc.ohio.gov

12 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT:
13 (Appearing in the presence of the Respondent)

14 Monica A. Sansalone, Esq.
15 Gallagher Sharp, LLP
16 1215 Superior Avenue, Seventh Floor
17 Cleveland, Ohio 44114
18 (216) 522-1154
19 msansalone@gallaghersharp.com

20 ALSO PRESENT:

21 Hon. Leslie Ann Celebrezze
22
23 Richard A. Dove, Esq., Director
24 Board of Professional Conduct

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1	I N D E X	
2	- - -	
3	WITNESS	PAGE
4	Hon. Leslie Ann Celebrezze	
5	Cross-examination by Mr. Caligiuri	19
6	- - -	
7	JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
8	Stipulations	22
9	1 Case Information, Jason G. Jardine v. Crystal T. Jardine	22
10	2 February 3, 2021, Motion to	22
11	Disqualify Joseph G. Stafford and, by	
12	Imputation, any other Lawyer or Law	
13	Firm with which Joseph G. Stafford is	
14	Associated	
15	3 March 19, 2021, Defendant's Motion to	22
16	Appoint Receiver	
17	4 March 22, 2021, Defendant's Emergency	22
18	Motion to Appoint Receiver	
19	5 March 30, 2021, Brief in Opposition	22
20	to Defendant's Motion to Appoint	
21	Receiver and Emergency Motion to	
22	Appoint Receiver	
23	6 July 14, 2021, Judgment Entry	22
24	7 July 15, 2021, Oath of Receiver	22
25	8 July 16, 2021, Notice of Appeal	22
	9 May 26, 2022, Journal Entry and	22
	Opinion	
	10 May 26, 2022, Receiver's Motion to	22
	Revise Appointment Order	

I N D E X (continued)

- - -

JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
11 June 7, 2022, Receiver's Emergency Amended Motion to Revise Appointment Order	22
12 June 9, 2022, Brief in Opposition to Receiver's Motion to Revise Appointment Order and Emergency Amended Motion to Revise Appointment Order	22
13 August 9, 2022, Judgment Entry	22
14 August 12, 2022, Judgment Entry Nunc Pro Tunc of Recusal	22
15 August 29, 2022, Receiver's Supplemental Brief in Support of Motion to Amend Appointment Order	22
16 August 30, 2022, Amended Order Modifying Receivership	22
17 September 1, 2022, Receiver's Motion to Approve Receiver's and Receiver's Legal Counsel's Fees for the Period July 14, 2021 through August 25, 2022	22
18 September 2, 2022, Motion to Reconsider August 30, 2022 Amended Order Modifying Receivership	22
19 September 6, 2022, Receiver's Brief in Opposition to Motion to Reconsider August 30, 2022 Amended Order Modifying Receivership	22
20 September 21, 2022, Order Approving Receiver's Motion to Approve Receiver's and His Legal Counsel's Fees	22

I N D E X (continued)

- - -

JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
21 February 16, 2023, Order Approving Receiver's Motion to Approve Receiver's and His Legal Counsel's Fees	22
22 February 27, 2023, Plaintiff's Objections to Payment Receiver Fees and Expenses	22
23 March 20, 2023, Receiver's Motion to Show Cause Against Plaintiff Jason Jardine	22
24 March 22, 2023, Motion to Show Cause	22
25 March 24, 2023, Order Approving Receiver's Motion to Approve Receiver's and His Legal Counsel's Fees	22
26 August 18, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
27 August 18, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
28 August 21, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
29 August 25, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
30 August 29, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
31 May 18, 2023, Affidavit of Jason G. Jardine in Support of His Request to Disqualify Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze From Presiding Over Future Proceedings	22
32 June 2, 2023, Second Supplemental Affidavit of Jason G. Jardine in Support of His Request to Disqualify Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze From Presiding Over Future Proceedings	22

I N D E X (continued)

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JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
33 June 21, 2023, Motion to File the Response to the Affidavits of Jason G. Jardine In Support of His Request to Disqualify Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze Confidentially and/or Under Seal	22
34 June 22, 2023, Response to the Affidavits of Jason G. Jardine in Support of His Request To Disqualify Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze	22
35 In re Disqualification of Celebrezze, 173 Ohio St.3d 1281, 2023-Ohio-4383	22
36 Case Information, Ari Maron v. Jessica Maron	22
37 December 2, 2021, Judgment Entry	22
38 December 3, 2021, Judgment Entry	22
39 December 22, 2022, Judgment Entry	22
40 January 19, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
41 April 17, 2023, Notice of Appearance	22
42 August 18, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
43 Case Information, Elizabeth Abedrabbo v. Abdelrahman Abedrabbo	22
44 March 4, 2021, Judgment Entry	22
45 September 28, 2021, Judgment Entry	22
46 August 18, 2022, Judgement Entry	22
47 September 12, 2022, Notice of Additional Counsel	22

I N D E X (continued)

- - -

JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
48 November 21, 2022, Judgment Entry	22
49 November 22, 2022, Magistrate's Order	22
50 January 25, 2023, e-mails	22
51 January 26, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
52 January 27, 2023, Journal Entry	22
53 February 1, 2023, Defendant's Motion to Continue	22
54 February 3, 2023, Motion to Withdraw as Counsel	22
55 February 3, 2023, Judgment Entry Withdrawal of Counsel	22
56 February 17, 2023, e-mails	22
57 March 15, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
58 March 16, 2023, Judgment Entry	22
59 September 10, 2024, e-mails	22
60 November 10, 2022, Complaint for Writ of Mandamus	22
61 November 10, 2022, Affidavit of Robert T. Glickman, Esq., In Verification of Complaint for Writ of Mandamus	22
62 November 29, 2022, Respondent's Motion to Dismiss	22
63 February 9, 2022, Relator Abdelrahman Abedrabbo's Response in Opposition to Respondent's Motion to Dismiss	22

1	I N D E X (continued)		
2	- - -		
3	JOINT EXHIBITS		ADMITTED
4	64	January 25, 2023, Entry	22
5	65	February 6, 2023, Affidavit of Disqualification Regarding the Honorable Colleen Ann Reali	22
6			
7	66	February 17, 2023, Supplemental Affidavit of Disqualification	22
8			
9	67	May 4, 2023, letter to Donald M. Scheetz from George D. Jonson	22
10	68	September 5, 2023, letter to Donald M. Scheetz from George D. Jonson and Lisa M. Zaring	22
11			
12	69	August 28, 2023, letter to Donald M. Scheetz from George D. Jonson and Lisa M. Zaring	22
13			
14	70	November 30, 2024, letter to Joseph M. Caligiuri, Esq., from Monica A. Sansalone	22
15			
16	71	Grievance Form - Jason Jardine	22
17	72	September 18, 2024, Respondent Hon. Leslie Ann Celebrezze's Response to Notice of Intent to File Regarding Count III of Relator's Complaint	22
18			
19	73	January 21, 2025, Answer of Respondent Leslie Ann Celebrezze to Relator's Second Amended Complaint	22
20			
21	74	Case Information, Andrew W. Rennell v. Susan L. Rennell	22
22			
23	75	May 18, 2022, Judgment Entry	22
24	76	May 18, 2022, Judgment Entry	22
25			

I N D E X (continued)

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JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
77 July 12, 2022, Defendant's Motion to Appoint Receiver to Effectuate the Sale of a Marital Business	22
78 July 14, 2022, Application of the Receiver to Retain Whitmer & Ehrman LLC as Attorneys for the Receiver	22
79 July 13, 2022, Order Appointing Receiver	22
80 July 19, 2022, Order Approving Retention of Whitmer & Ehrman LLC as Attorneys for the Receiver	22
81 January 28, 2025, letter to Monica A. Sansalone, Esq., from Christopher A. Boyko, Senior Ohio Northern District Judge	22
82 Resume of Mark E. Dottore	22
83 Rule 36.019. Assignment of Cases Following a Recusal	22
84 Rule 2: Assignment of Judge and Consolidation of Cases	22
85 Report Summary of Investigation	22
86 A Video Recording from Private Investigator, March 15, 2023	22
B Video Recording from Private Investigator (Indoor), March 15, 2023	
C Video Recording from Private Investigator, March 21, 2023	
D Video Recording from Private Investigator, March 22, 2023	

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I N D E X (continued)

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JOINT EXHIBITS	ADMITTED
86 E Video Recording from Private Investigator, March 24, 2023	22
F Video Recording from Private Investigator, March 31, 2023	
G Screenshot, March 15, 2023	
H Screenshot, March 22, 2023	
87 Summary of Fees	22
88 August 11 to September 10, 2022, Verizon Cell Phone Records	22
89 Chart, Judge Celebrezze's Phone Calls with Mark Dottore (August 12, 2022 - August 18, 2023)	22
90 April 18 and 20, 2022, e-mails	22

- - -

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 - - -

3 Monday, March 31, 2025

4 Morning Session

5 - - -

6 CHAIR COSS: Good morning, everyone.

7 This is a formal hearing on a complaint filed
8 with the Board of Professional Conduct styled in
9 the matter of Disciplinary Counsel versus
10 Honorable Leslie Ann Celebrezze, Respondent,
11 Board Case No. 2024-024.

12 This proceeding is being held pursuant
13 to Rule II of the Supreme Court Rules for the
14 Government of the Judiciary of Ohio and Rule V of
15 the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the
16 Bar of Ohio, which sets forth the procedure for
17 adjudicating disciplinary matters.

18 And pursuant to Gov. Bar Rule V, this
19 hearing is open to public access via remote
20 teleconferencing software. I would ask all of
21 those who are not directly involved in the
22 hearing to make sure that your microphones are
23 muted and your video is turned off.

24 Now, sitting on the panel this morning
25 is Margaret Murray from Erie County, she's

1 appearing on the screen both video and audio, and
2 Kurt Kaufman, Esquire, from Allen County. And
3 due to technical difficulties, Mr. Kaufman is
4 appearing -- or is only on the audio portion on
5 the screen that has the telephone symbol with his
6 name below it.

7 I'm Judge Rocky Coss from Highland
8 County Common Pleas Court, and I'm chair of the
9 panel today.

10 All right. The record should show that
11 the Respondent is present with her counsel via
12 remote video teleconferencing.

13 And at this time, I'll ask counsel for
14 the Relator and then the Respondent to identify
15 themselves for the record.

16 MR. CALIGIURI: Good morning, your
17 Honor. Joe Caligiuri and Jay Wampler for
18 Relator.

19 MS. SANSALONE: Good morning, your
20 Honor. Monica Sansalone for Respondent.

21 CHAIR COSS: All right.

22 JUDGE CELEBREZZE: Good morning, your
23 Honor. Leslie Celebrezze.

24 CHAIR COSS: All right. And I believe
25 Mr. Wampler is also present from the Relator's

1 office.

2 MR. WAMPLER: Good morning, your Honor.

3 CHAIR COSS: All right. Good morning,
4 everyone. And at this time, I would ask counsel
5 for both Relator and Respondent as well as the
6 Respondent to state on the record that this
7 hearing is being conducted by their agreement
8 remotely and waiving an in-person hearing,
9 consenting to this matter being conducted solely
10 by remote video.

11 MR. CALIGIURI: Agreed.

12 MS. SANSALONE: Agreed, your Honor.

13 CHAIR COSS: Okay. And,
14 Judge Celebrezze, you're also in agreement?

15 JUDGE CELEBREZZE: Yes, your Honor.

16 CHAIR COSS: All right. Thank you.

17 All right. Although this is a fully
18 stipulated hearing, I'm going to go ahead and
19 read the standard opening statement that we have
20 in these cases, and then there will be some
21 exceptions that we'll discuss after I complete
22 that.

23 The members of the panel are conducting
24 this disciplinary hearing, and we function
25 pursuant to the authority granted to the Board of

1 Professional Conduct in Rule II of the Supreme
2 Court Rules for the Government of the Judiciary
3 of Ohio and Rule V of the Supreme Court Rules for
4 the Government of the Bar of Ohio. The burden of
5 proof is on the Relator to establish misconduct
6 by clear and convincing evidence.

7 All witnesses will testify under oath.
8 And at the conclusion of the testimony, witnesses
9 may be questioned by members of the panel. Under
10 the standard rules, the Respondent may be
11 required to answer questions under oath from
12 members of the panel regardless of whether the
13 Respondent is called by the parties as a witness.
14 If a panel member asks questions of a witness,
15 the parties will have an opportunity to ask
16 follow-up questions of those witnesses based on
17 the questions from the panel.

18 Each party has been directed to review
19 the prehearing instructions posted on the board's
20 website and asked that you comply with those
21 instructions. And we expect the same degree of
22 cooperation and professionalism that is customary
23 in all court proceedings.

24 And also ask the parties be mindful of
25 the court reporter's responsibility while

1 transcribing today's proceedings and avoid
2 talking over one another, and that's particularly
3 important in a remote hearing. And for the
4 record, Ms. Lin Riffle is our court reporter.
5 She's appearing on the panel with her -- her name
6 marked as such.

7 The Civil Rules and Rules of Evidence
8 are to be observed in this hearing. If there is
9 any objection, please wait for a ruling from the
10 chair.

11 Now, at the conclusion of the hearing,
12 the submission of argument, the panel may dismiss
13 the complaint, preparing a report to the board
14 that recommends dismissal, or find Respondent
15 guilty of misconduct and prepare a report for
16 review by the board. If the board finds that the
17 Respondent has engaged in misconduct, the board
18 will file a certified report of its findings of
19 fact, conclusions of law, and a recommended
20 sanction with the Supreme Court of Ohio.

21 All right. That completes the
22 statement. Now, I wanted to go ahead and comment
23 on a couple things after our preconference
24 hearing Friday.

25 The Respondent had previously indicated,

1 on advice of counsel not in this proceeding, to
2 invoke her Fifth Amendment rights. And so,
3 therefore, there was no deposition conducted.
4 And today that she would only be called for the
5 sole purpose of asking her questions to confirm
6 her agreement with the stipulations, as is common
7 in these proceedings.

8 And no other types of questions will be
9 asked by Relator nor in this case, assuming that
10 that Fifth Amendment right is being invoked, then
11 the panel members would not either.

12 And at this point, is that an accurate
13 statement, Ms. Sansalone, regarding the
14 situation?

15 MS. SANSALONE: It is, your Honor.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIR COSS: Okay. And as I had
18 indicated in my statements to counsel, because of
19 that right, the panel will not ask any questions
20 and will not draw any adverse inferences due to
21 invocation of that right.

22 All right. Now, the only one other
23 thing I wanted to comment -- or ask about, and I
24 should have asked this at the prehearing Friday,
25 counsel, but from my reading of the stipulations,

1 all allegations of misconduct have been admitted;
2 is that correct?

3 MS. SANSALONE: That is correct, your
4 Honor.

5 CHAIR COSS: As set forth in the second
6 amended complaint, I should say.

7 Ms. Sansalone?

8 MS. SANSALONE: That is correct, your
9 Honor.

10 CHAIR COSS: All right. And then are
11 there any contested issues on the aggravating and
12 mitigating factors, or are those also -- are they
13 going to be the only things that are going to be
14 considered?

15 Mr. Caligiuri, I'll ask you first.

16 MR. CALIGIURI: Your Honor, those are
17 the complete stipulations regarding aggravation
18 and mitigation. At this point in time we're not
19 going to argue beyond the stipulations.

20 CHAIR COSS: All right. And I assume
21 the same thing's true of Respondent,
22 Ms. Sansalone?

23 MS. SANSALONE: Yes, it is, your Honor.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIR COSS: All right. Thank you. I

1 just wanted to get that clarified for the record
2 as well.

3 All right. Now, are there any other
4 matters that the parties -- counsel and the
5 parties would like to address before we get into
6 the questioning regarding the stipulations?

7 MR. CALIGIURI: No, your Honor.

8 MS. SANSALONE: No, your Honor.

9 CHAIR COSS: All right. And I assume
10 the parties are going to waive opening statement?

11 MR. CALIGIURI: Yes, your Honor.

12 MS. SANSALONE: Correct.

13 CHAIR COSS: All right. Then do you
14 wish to call the Respondent for the sole purpose,
15 Mr. Caligiuri, of informing regarding the
16 stipulations?

17 MR. CALIGIURI: Yes, thank you.

18 CHAIR COSS: All right. Ms. Riffle, if
19 you would administer the oath to the Respondent,
20 please.

21 (Witness placed under oath.)

22 CHAIR COSS: All right. Mr. Caligiuri,
23 you can inquire.

24 MR. CALIGIURI: Thank you.

25 - - -

1 HON. LESLIE ANN CELEBREZZE,
2 of lawful age, being by me first duly placed
3 under oath, as prescribed by law, was examined
4 and testified as follows:

5 CROSS-EXAMINATION

6 BY MR. CALIGIURI:

7 Q. Good morning, Judge.

8 A. Good morning.

9 Q. Judge, I'm going to ask you to please
10 turn the -- to Page 28 of the exhibits that I'm
11 assuming you have right in front of you, correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. All right.

14 A. So Page 28?

15 Q. Yes. And that is the signature page,
16 the stipulations that we entered into, correct?

17 A. Yes, it is.

18 Q. And you personally signed the
19 stipulations on March 26th, 2025, correct?

20 A. Yes, I did.

21 Q. And that is, in fact, your signature on
22 Page 28, correct?

23 A. Yes, it is.

24 Q. And that is your lawyer's signature
25 underneath your signature, Ms. Sansalone's,

1 correct?

2 A. Yes, it is.

3 Q. And you had sufficient time to review
4 the stipulations with your counsel, correct?

5 A. Yes, I have.

6 Q. And you signed the stipulations because
7 they are true and accurate, correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. You signed them voluntarily?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. You signed them under your own free
12 will?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And you understand that the stipulations
15 do not include a recommended sanction, either
16 from our office or from your attorney, correct?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And no promises were made in exchange
19 for your signature on these stipulations,
20 correct?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And you understand that the panel is not
23 bound by the stipulations that we've entered
24 into, correct?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And you understand that, regardless of
2 the ultimate recommendation either by our office,
3 by your lawyer, by the panel, or by the board,
4 that the Supreme Court will be the entity that
5 issues the ultimate sanction in this matter?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Now, from speaking with your attorney
8 and with Judge Coss's instructions, it's my
9 understanding that you intend to invoke your
10 Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination
11 to any questions beyond what we've covered this
12 morning, correct?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And I would just ask that you state that
15 for the record.

16 A. I hereby invoke my Fifth Amendment
17 rights.

18 Q. And with that, I would ask that the
19 stipulations, including the stipulated exhibits,
20 be entered into evidence at this time.

21 CHAIR COSS: Ms. Sansalone?

22 MS. SANSALONE: No objection.

23 CHAIR COSS: Okay.

24 MS. SANSALONE: No objection.

25 CHAIR COSS: All right. The

1 stipulations, including all exhibits attached
2 thereto, are hereby admitted as part of the
3 record in this case.

4 - - -

5 Thereupon, the Stipulations and Joint
6 Exhibits 1 through 85, 86A through 86H,
7 and 87 through 90 were admitted into
8 evidence.

9 - - -

10 MR. CALIGIURI: And with that, your
11 Honor, Relator would rest.

12 CHAIR COSS: All right. And,
13 Ms. Sansalone, you have no -- do you have any
14 need to question your -- your client about the
15 stipulations, or are you satisfied with Relator's
16 exam?

17 MS. SANSALONE: I'm satisfied with
18 Mr. Caligiuri's exam. Thank you.

19 (Witness excused.)

20 CHAIR COSS: Okay. Anything further,
21 then, Mr. Caligiuri, on behalf of Relator?

22 MR. CALIGIURI: No. Thank you.

23 CHAIR COSS: Ms. Sansalone?

24 MS. SANSALONE: Nothing further, your
25 Honor.

1 CHAIR COSS: All right. Well, then, the
2 court, as I -- or I should say the panel, as I
3 indicated, will accept written briefing on the
4 issue of the sanctions. And the briefing
5 schedule I believe we came up with, I indicated,
6 would be 30 days for the Relator to file from
7 today, not from the date of the filing of the
8 transcript since it's going to be a fairly
9 abbreviated transcript and the evidentiary
10 matters are all contained in the stipulations.

11 So we'll start the clock today.
12 Respondent will have 30 days, then, from the date
13 that Relator files its brief to file a response.
14 And then Relator will have 14 days thereafter to
15 file a reply to the Respondent's response.

16 And that will be the order of the chair.

17 Okay. Anything further, then, from the
18 parties?

19 MR. CALIGIURI: No, your Honor. Thank
20 you.

21 MS. SANSALONE: No, your Honor. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIR COSS: All right. Thank you.

24 - - -

25 (Thereupon, the remote

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videoconference hearing concluded
at 10:24 a.m. on Monday,
March 31, 2025.)

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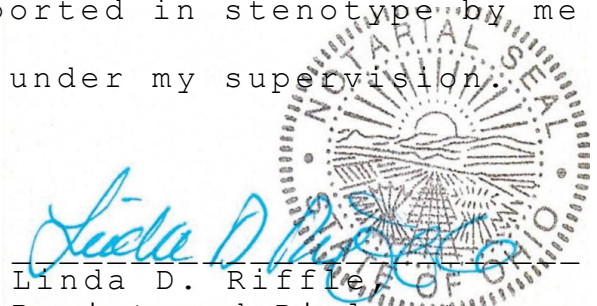
C E R T I F I C A T E

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State of Ohio, :
County of Franklin, : SS:

- - -

I, Linda D. Riffle, Registered Diplomate Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, Certified Realtime Captioner, and Notary Public in and for the State of Ohio, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the March 31, 2025, proceedings before the Board of Professional Conduct of the Supreme Court of Ohio, In the Matter of Leslie Ann Celebrezze, Case No. 2024-024, as reported in stenotype by me and transcribed by me or under my supervision.



Linda D. Riffle,
Registered Diplomate Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, Certified Realtime Captioner, and Notary Public in and for the State of Ohio

My Commission Expires: July 26, 2026

- - -