

Name: Judge Kevin Kane

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Comment:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to Canons 4 and 6 of the Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct. I write to express my opposition to these proposed changes, particularly the provisions regarding the disclosure of a judge's spouse's financial information.

I have lived in a small, rural community for many years. Before being elected to the bench, I served as an attorney referee for seven years. Throughout my career, I have been deeply involved in community organizations and local events, and as a result, my life is already quite public. I hold myself to the highest ethical standards because of the immense trust placed in me by my position. However, I believe these proposed amendments, particularly the new requirements to disclose personal financial information about a judge's spouse, would unfairly increase risks to judges and their families. In an era where judicial officers face increasing threats and security concerns, these new disclosure requirements fail to account for the realities judges face and would expose them and their families to potential harm from those who seek to harass or intimidate members of the judiciary.

While I understand the need for transparency and accountability, I do not believe it is appropriate to require judges to disclose personal, private information about their spouses—especially when those spouses are not bound by the Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct. Asking judges to request this sensitive information from their spouses, or to report it themselves, oversteps personal boundaries and undermines privacy. This proposal appears to place unnecessary pressure on judges and their families, particularly those in smaller communities like mine, where privacy and personal security are especially important.

Moreover, the implications of these changes are far-reaching, especially for quasi-judicial officers such as attorney referees and magistrates. These individuals may serve in a judicial capacity for only a limited time, deriving minimal compensation from their quasi-judicial duties. The proposed amendments, which introduce invasive and burdensome disclosure requirements, could deter individuals from serving in these important roles, further compounding challenges in recruiting qualified people for judicial service.

In conclusion, I urge the Michigan Supreme Court to reconsider the scope of these proposed amendments. It is crucial to strike a balance between transparency, privacy, and security, while ensuring that the duties of the judiciary are fulfilled without imposing undue risks on judges or their families. I hope you will take these concerns into account and find a solution that respects both the ethical standards of judicial officers and the privacy and safety of their personal lives.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.