



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

Disciplinary Counsel

Relator,

v.

Case No. 24-024

Hon. Leslie Ann Celebrezze
Attorney Registration No. 0071679

Respondent.

Second Amended Complaint

Relator alleges that Leslie Celebrezze, an attorney at law duly admitted to the practice of law in the state of Ohio, is guilty of the following misconduct:

1. Respondent was admitted to the practice of law in the state of Ohio on November 8, 1999.
2. Respondent is subject to the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct, the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct, the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio, and the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Judiciary of Ohio.
3. At all times herein, respondent was the Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division.
4. At all times herein, respondent served the court with four other judges: Colleen Reali, Tonya Jones, Diane Palos, and Francine Goldberg.
5. Mark Dottore is the President and CEO of Dottore Companies, LLC, and serves as a court-appointed receiver and mediator. At all times herein, Dottore, who is not an attorney, and his company were represented by counsel.

6. Respondent and Dottore have known each other since childhood.
7. Dottore served as respondent's campaign treasurer in her 2008 judicial campaign.

Count One

The Jardine Matter

8. On December 29, 2020, Jason Jardine filed for divorce from his wife, Crystal Jardine. *Jardine v. Jardine*, Cuyahoga C.P., No. DR-20-383667.
9. The *Jardine* case was randomly assigned to Judge Tonya Jones.
10. Joseph Stafford represented Jason. Richard Rabb represented Crystal.¹
11. The Jardines owned and operated several funeral homes and cremation centers in Northeast Ohio.
12. On February 3, 2021, Crystal's other lawyer, Nicholas Froning, filed a *Motion to Disqualify Joseph G. Stafford*, the attorney representing Jason. The court set the matter for a hearing on August 25, 2021; however, it was later continued, and never held.
13. On March 19, 2021, Crystal filed a *Motion to Appoint Receiver*.
14. On July 14, 2021, Judge Jones appointed Dottore as the receiver in the *Jardine* divorce. The order pertained to five of the Jardines' business entities and was limited to marshaling the assets, identifying the stakeholders, conducting an accounting, and determining if the entities were managed prudently.
15. On July 16, 2021, Jason appealed the appointment of a receiver to the Eighth District Court of Appeals.
16. For the next year, both parties filed dozens of motions and conducted discovery in their highly contentious divorce action.

¹ Nicholas Froning, Esq. entered an appearance for Crystal on February 2, 2021, for the limited purpose of seeking Stafford's disqualification due to an alleged conflict of interest.

17. On May 26, 2022, the Eighth District Court of Appeals affirmed the appointment of the receiver. *Jardine v. Jardine*, 2022-Ohio-1754 (8th Dist.).
18. The same day, Dottore filed a *Motion to Revise Appointment Order*, in which he sought to expand the scope of his duties.
19. On June 7, 2022, Dottore filed an *Emergency Amended Motion to Revise Appointment Order*, seeking to expand the scope of his duties.
20. On or around August 9, 2022, before ruling on the aforementioned motions, Judge Jones voluntarily recused herself from the *Jardine* divorce due to the alleged conflict of interest relating to Jones' staff attorney having joined the Stafford law firm as an associate.
21. Under Sup.Ct.R. 36.019(A) and Cuyahoga C.P. Dom. Rel. Div-Loc.R. 2(B)(2), upon recusal by a judge, the administrative judge must randomly assign the case.
22. Upon recusal, Judge Jones sent the case to respondent for random reassignment.
23. Upon receiving the case, respondent approached Judge Jones and asked her to issue an order assigning the case directly to respondent.
24. Three days later, on August 12, 2022, Judge Jones issued a *Judgment Entry Nunc Pro Tunc of Recusal*, in which Jones reasserted her recusal but assigned the *Jardine* case directly to respondent.
25. On August 29, 2022, Dottore filed a *Supplemental Brief in Support of Motion to Amend Appointment Order*.
26. The following day, August 30, 2022, respondent granted Dottore's motion and issued an amended order modifying (i.e., expanding) the receivership.
27. On September 2, 2022, Jason filed a *Motion to Reconsider August 30, 2022 Amended Order Modifying Receivership*. Dottore opposed the *Motion to Reconsider*.

28. On September 20, 2022, respondent approved payment of Dottore's and his legal counsel's fees for the period of July 14, 2021, through August 25, 2022.
29. On February 16, 2023, respondent approved payment of Dottore's and his legal counsel's fees for the period of January 1, 2023, through January 31, 2023.
30. Suspecting an improper relationship between respondent and Dottore, in or around March 2023, Jason hired a private investigator to conduct video surveillance on respondent and Dottore.
31. Between March 14, 2023, and March 31, 2023, the private investigator photographed and recorded respondent and Dottore as described in the following paragraphs.
32. On Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in the early afternoon, respondent drove her vehicle to Dottore's company in downtown Cleveland, entered the building, and remained inside for 31 minutes.
33. On Wednesday, March 15, 2023, at approximately 5:00 p.m., respondent entered the Capital Grill in Lyndhurst, OH. A few minutes later, Dottore entered the Capital Grill and sat with respondent at a table.
34. Respondent and Dottore were joined by Rabb (Crystal's attorney). The three socialized over drinks.
35. Dottore left the Capital Grill at 5:49 p.m. Respondent and Rabb remained at the Capital Grill until they departed in their respective vehicles at 6:38 p.m.
36. On Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 4:19 p.m., respondent arrived by car at Dottore's office, entered the building, and remained inside for 42 minutes.
37. On Monday, March 20, 2023, Dottore filed a *Motion to Show Cause* against Jason alleging Jason's noncompliance with the appointment orders.

38. On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 12:15 p.m., respondent entered Dottore's office, where she remained for 19 minutes.
39. On Wednesday, March 22, 2023, Jason filed a *Motion to Show Cause* against Dottore.
40. That afternoon, Wednesday, March 22, 2023, at 4:32 p.m., respondent arrived at Delmonico's Steakhouse in Independence, OH. Upon arrival, Dottore's car was parked in the restaurant's parking lot.
41. Respondent and Dottore remained inside Delmonico's Steakhouse for two hours and 26 minutes.
42. Upon leaving the restaurant, Dottore leaned toward respondent, and they kissed each other on the lips.
43. On Friday, March 24, 2023, at 1:36 p.m., respondent left her home and drove to Dottore's home on Richmond Road in Lyndhurst. Dottore's car was parked in his garage, and the garage door was open.
44. Respondent entered through the garage and moments later the garage door closed. Respondent remained at Dottore's home for two hours and 26 minutes.
45. On that same day, March 24, 2023, respondent approved payment of Dottore's and his legal counsel's fees for the period of February 1, 2023, through February 28, 2023.
46. On Friday, March 31, 2023, respondent left her home at 9:46 a.m. and drove to Dottore's home on Richmond Road in Lyndhurst. Respondent remained in Dottore's home for 61 minutes.
47. On May 18, 2023, Jason filed an *Affidavit of Disqualification* against respondent.
48. On July 22, 2023, respondent submitted her response to the *Affidavit of Disqualification*.

49. On August 18, 2023, Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy disqualified respondent from presiding over the *Jardine* matter. *In re Disqualification of Celebrezze*, 2023-Ohio-4383.
50. As of August 18, 2023, respondent had authorized and/or approved \$241,935 in receiver fees to Dottore and \$171,859.31 to Dottore’s legal counsel in the *Jardine* matter.
51. At no time did respondent disclose the nature of her relationship with Dottore or Rabb to any of the parties or their lawyers.
52. Respondent’s conduct, as alleged in Count One, violates the following provisions of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct and the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct:
- Jud.Cond.R. 1.2 [A 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];
 - Jud.Cond.R. 2.5 [A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently and diligently and shall comply with guidelines set forth in the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio];
 - Jud.Cond.R. 2.11(A) [A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned]; and
 - Prof.Cond.R. 8.4(d) [A lawyer shall not engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice].

Count Two

Respondent’s conduct in the *Maron* and *Abedrabbo* Matters

The Maron Matter

53. On September 1, 2020, Ari Maron filed for divorce against his wife, Jessica Maron. *Maron v. Maron*, Cuyahoga C.P., No. DR-20-382494.

54. The case was randomly assigned to Judge Francine Goldberg.
55. On December 2, 2021, Judge Goldberg recused herself, and the case was randomly assigned to Judge Colleen Reali.
56. Attorneys Jonathan Rich and Larry Zukerman represented Ari, while Joseph Stafford represented Jessica.
57. Judge Reali assigned the case to her magistrate, Jason Parker.
58. In December 2022, Magistrate Parker became ill and began working a reduced schedule.
59. The *Maron* case was very contentious with the parties filing dozens of motions.
60. In early January 2023, respondent approached Magistrate Parker and advised him that she would take the *Maron* case to relieve the burden of presiding over the contentious case while he was ill.
61. A few days later, respondent approached Judge Reali and stated, “I’ve been getting some calls on the *Maron* case.” Respondent then offered to take the *Maron* case to reduce Judge Reali’s caseload, given her magistrate’s situation.
62. On or about January 18, 2023, Judge Reali recused herself from the *Maron* case.
63. As stated in ¶ 21, under Sup.Ct.R. 36.019(A) and Cuyahoga C.P., Dom.Rel.Div., Loc.R. 2(B)(2), upon recusal by a judge, the administrative judge must randomly assign the case.
64. Rather than having the case randomly assigned, respondent directed the assignment commissioner to manually assign the *Maron* case to her. Respondent then issued an entry that falsely stated the case had been *randomly* assigned to her.

To preclude any propriety or the appearance of a conflict of interest on the part of the assigned Judge, **COLLEEN ANN REALI** voluntarily removes herself from the above captioned case. This case is hereby reassigned to Judge **LESLIE ANN CELEBREZZE** (via electronic judge roll) to resolve all pending and future issues.

65. Respondent set the matter for trial on February 14, 2023.
66. After the trial commenced, the court took a recess for the parties to discuss settlement.
67. During settlement discussions, respondent asked the parties' lawyers to consider a mediator. When asked who she would recommend, respondent recommended Dottore.
68. Both parties objected to the appointment of Dottore.
69. On April 17, 2023, Attorney Robert Glickman filed his notice of appearance on behalf of Ari Maron.
70. On August 18, 2023,² respondent recused herself from the *Maron* case, and the case was randomly assigned to Judge Diane Palos.

The Abedrabbo Matter

71. On February 25, 2021, Elizabeth Abedrabbo filed for divorce from her husband, Abdelrahman Abedrabbo. *Abedrabbo v. Abedrabbo*, Cuyahoga C.P., No. DR-21-384289.
72. The *Abedrabbo* case was randomly assigned to Judge Francine Goldberg; however, due to a conflict, the case was eventually randomly assigned to Judge Colleen Reali on or about March 4, 2021.
73. Attorney Joseph Stafford represented Elizabeth, and Attorneys Scott Rosenthal and Robert Glickman³ represented Abdelrahman.
74. On previous occasions, respondent has referred to Glickman as her lawyer, and respondent has told Judges Reali and Goldberg that she consulted Stafford and Rosenthal about a divorce from her husband.

² On the same day, respondent was disqualified from presiding over the *Jardine* matter. See ¶ 49.

³ Glickman's representation was limited to filing the *Writ of Mandamus* and *Affidavit of Disqualification*.

75. On November 10, 2022, Glickman filed a *Writ of Mandamus* against Judge Reali seeking to compel Judge Reali to enter rulings on four motions that had been pending. *Abedrabbo v. Reali*, Supreme Court Case No. 2022-1386.
76. On November 29, 2022, Judge Reali filed a *Motion to Dismiss* the *Writ*.
77. On January 25, 2023, the Supreme Court of Ohio issued a decision granting an Alternative Writ of Mandamus ordering Judge Reali to comply with a briefing schedule for the presentation of the evidence in the *Abedrabbo* divorce case.
78. On the same day, respondent contacted Glickman to discuss the *Writ* he filed against Judge Reali. In response, Glickman sent a copy of the *Writ* to respondent via email.
79. On January 26, 2023, pursuant to the Supreme Court of Ohio's entry, Judge Reali issued an entry requiring the parties' attorneys to appear for an in-person conference on January 30, 2023, so Judge Reali could "advance the previously scheduled trial dates in the herein matter."
80. On that same day, respondent called Judge Reali and asked Judge Reali to transfer the *Abedrabbo* case to respondent, stating that since the Supreme Court was going to hear the *Writ*, Judge Reali would look bad if she stayed on the case.
81. Judge Reali refused respondent's directive, stating to respondent that judges do not just "give up" cases. Judge Reali explained that there was a recusal process and that the case would "go into the hopper" for random reassignment.
82. Respondent then stated to Judge Reali words to the effect of, "A little birdie told me that the *Abedrabbo Writ* will be heard, and the *Writ* will go away if you give me the case."

Respondent then stated words to the effect of, “Dottore is close to the new Chief Justice. He has her ear. Kennedy loves Dottore.”⁴

83. When Judge Reali again refused, respondent said, “We’ll talk later.”
84. Judge Reali understood that respondent was suggesting that if Judge Reali agreed to transfer the case to respondent, Glickman⁵ would dismiss the *Writ* against Judge Reali.
85. The following day, January 27, 2023, while respondent and Judge Reali were in respondent’s chambers, respondent again stated that Judge Reali should give the *Abedrabbo* case to respondent. When Judge Reali stated that it was not proper, respondent replied, “I still think you should give it to me anyway.”
86. On January 30, 2023, Judge Reali held the status conference with the attorneys; however, Glickman was not present.
87. Judge Reali scheduled the trial in *Abedrabbo* for Monday, February 6, 2023.
88. On January 30, 2023, Glickman filed a public records request with the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division, asking for all of Judge Reali’s cases in which Stafford was attorney of record.
89. On the same day, Judge Goldberg had a meeting in her chambers with Judge Reali and Judge Jones. Judge Goldberg called respondent on speakerphone to discuss the public records request. During the conference call, respondent stated words to the effect of, “It’s escalating. They’re going to read all our emails.”
90. Respondent stated that she did not want Judge Reali to review the response to the public records requests as it could constitute tampering.

⁴ Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy has no personal or professional relationship with Dottore.

⁵ Glickman has represented Dottore in receivership matters in the past and Glickman’s daughter worked for Dottore during the *Jardine* matter.

91. On January 31, 2023, respondent directed court staff to provide Glickman with the information responsive to the public records request without input from Judge Reali.
92. On February 1, 2023, Rosenthal filed a *Motion to Continue* the February 6, 2023 trial.
93. On February 2, 2023, the Domestic Relations judges held their monthly meeting; however, Judge Diane Palos was not in attendance due to a pre-planned vacation.
94. During the meeting, respondent told Judge Reali in the presence of Judge Goldberg and Judge Jones that Judge Reali must continue the *Abedrabbo* case.
95. The other judges asked respondent why Judge Reali had to continue the case.
96. Respondent falsely claimed there was an “administrative docket” and that Glickman had filed a *Motion to Continue* the *Abedrabbo* case on that docket.
97. None of the judges had heard of the “administrative docket,” and Judge Reali asked to see the motion.
98. Respondent replied that if Judge Reali did not continue the case, respondent would continue it.
99. Judge Reali replied with words to the effect of, “Go ahead, but you don’t have the authority to continue my case.”
100. Judge Reali ended the conversation by saying, “I am not continuing the case, and I am not getting off.”
101. Contrary to respondent’s assertions, there was no “administrative docket,” and Glickman had never filed a *Motion to Continue* in the *Abedrabbo* case.
102. On February 3, 2023, Glickman filed a *Motion to Withdraw as Counsel* for Abdelrahman.
103. On that same day, Judge Reali granted Glickman’s *Motion to Withdraw*.

104. On the morning of trial, February 6, 2023, Rosenthal appeared, and Judge Reali denied his *Motion for Continuance*.
105. On February 6, 2023, Glickman filed an *Affidavit of Disqualification* against Judge Reali in the Supreme Court of Ohio.
106. On February 17, 2023, Glickman sent a copy of the *Supplemental Affidavit* to his *Affidavit of Disqualification* that he filed against Judge Reali to respondent at her personal email address: zonfa.leslie@gmail.com. The attachment was entitled, “Supplemental Affidavit—Final Redline.”
107. On March 15, 2023, Judge Reali recused herself from the *Abedrabbo* case, and the case was randomly assigned to Judge Palos.
108. After the *Abedrabbo* case was assigned to Judge Palos, respondent approached Judge Palos’ bailiff and stated that Judge Palos could transfer the *Abedrabbo* case to respondent.
109. Judge Palos declined to transfer the case to respondent.
110. Respondent’s conduct, as alleged in Count Two, violates the following provisions of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct and the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct:
 - Jud.Cond.R. 1.2 [A 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];
 - Jud.Cond.R. 2.5 [A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently and diligently and shall comply with guidelines set forth in the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio];

- Jud.Cond.R. 2.9(A) [A judge shall not initiate, receive, permit, or consider ex parte communications];
- Jud.Cond.R. 2.11(A) [A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned];
- Prof.Cond.R. 8.4(c) [A lawyer shall not engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation]; and,
- Prof.Cond.R. 8.4(d) [A lawyer shall not engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice].

Count Three

False Statement During the Disciplinary Process

111. Jason Jardine filed a grievance against respondent, alleging bias resulting from her inappropriate and undisclosed relationships with Dottore, Rabb, and Glickman.
112. In response to the allegations, respondent admitted that she and Dottore are “close personal” friends and have known each other since respondent was seven years old; however, she categorically denied a romantic relationship and dismissed the kiss outside Delmonico’s Steakhouse, stating they both “are Italian and have a habit of kissing all family and close friends.”
113. Months before submitting her response to relator, respondent had disclosed to at least two of her fellow judges that she was in love with Dottore, and that she had consulted with attorneys about getting a divorce from her husband.
114. Respondent’s conduct, as alleged in Count Three, violates the following provisions of the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct:

- Prof.Cond.R. 8.1(a) [In connection with a disciplinary matter, a lawyer shall not knowingly make a false statement of material fact].

Count Four

The *Rennell* Matter

115. On October 28, 2019, Andrew Rennell filed for divorce against his wife, Susan Rennell. *Rennell v. Rennell*, Cuyahoga C.P. No. DR-19-37900.
116. The case was randomly assigned to Judge Tonya Jones.
117. Initially, Jennifer Singleton and Deanna DiPetta of the Myers Roman law firm represented Andrew and Jim Lane of the Rosenthal Thurman Lane law firm represented Susan.
118. In December 2020, Judge Jones’ magistrate, Sharon Echols, scheduled the matter for trial in March 2022; however, the trial date was canceled and rescheduled for July 2022.
119. Due to an issue that arose between DiPetta and Magistrate Echols in May 2022, Judge Jones and Magistrate Echols recused themselves from the case.
120. Jones advised respondent in her capacity as the Administrative Judge of the recusal and that the case had been set for trial.
121. Respondent advised Judge Jones that she could accommodate the trial dates; consequently, Judge Jones sent the case to respondent.
122. As stated in ¶ 21, under Sup.Ct.R. 36.019(A) and Cuyahoga C.P., Dom.Rel.Div., Loc.R. 2(B)(2), upon recusal by a judge, the administrative judge must randomly assign the case.
123. In her May 18, 2022, entry, Jones stated, “It is therefore ordered, adjudged, and decreed that this matter will be transferred to the Administrative Judge” and “that this matter will remain scheduled for trial.”

124. On or about May 18, 2022, rather than having the case randomly assigned, respondent manually assigned the *Rennell* case to her own docket.
125. On July 13, 2022, Lane filed a motion to appoint Dottore as a receiver to effectuate the sale of the marital business.
126. That same day, July 13, 2022, respondent granted Lane's motion and appointed Dottore as receiver in the *Rennell* matter.
127. On July 19, 2022, respondent approved the appointment of Mary Whitmer to represent Dottore.
128. At no time did respondent disclose the nature of her relationship with Dottore to any of the parties or their lawyers.
129. In August 2022, Andrew filed for bankruptcy, which stayed the divorce case. The bankruptcy was dismissed in September 2023.
130. As stated in paragraph 49, on August 18, 2023, Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy disqualified respondent from presiding over the *Jardine* matter for circumventing the Rules of Superintendence and the Local Rules and manually reassigning the *Jardine* case to her own docket. *In re Disqualification of Celebrezze*, 2023-Ohio-4383.
131. Despite the ruling, respondent continued to preside over the *Rennell* matter until their divorce was finalized on August 15, 2024.
132. Neither Dottore nor his lawyer, Whitmer, submitted a request for fees, nor has respondent awarded any fees to Dottore or Whitmer in the *Rennell* matter.
133. Respondent's conduct, as alleged in Count Four, violates the following provisions of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct and the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct:

- Jud.Cond.R. 1.2 [A 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];
- Jud.Cond.R. 2.5 [A judge shall perform judicial and administrative duties competently and diligently and shall comply with guidelines set forth in the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio];
- Jud.Cond.R. 2.11(A) [A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned]; and
- Prof.Cond.R. 8.4(d) [A lawyer shall not engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice].

Conclusion

Relator requests that respondent be found in violation of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct and the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct and be sanctioned accordingly.

Respectfully submitted,

/s Joseph M. Caligiuri
Joseph M. Caligiuri (0074786)
Disciplinary Counsel
Office of Disciplinary Counsel
65 East State Street, Suite 1510
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4215
Telephone: (614) 387-9700
Joseph.Caligiuri@odc.ohio.gov
Relator

/s Jay R. Wampler
Jay R. Wampler (0095219)
Assistant Disciplinary Counsel
Jay.Wampler@odc.ohio.gov
Counsel for Relator

Certificate

The undersigned, Joseph M. Caligiuri, Disciplinary Counsel, hereby certifies that he and Jay R. Wampler are authorized to represent relator in the action and have accepted the responsibility of prosecuting the complaint to its conclusion.

Dated: January 18, 2025

/s Joseph M. Caligiuri
Joseph M. Caligiuri (0074786)
Disciplinary Counsel

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Second Amended Complaint was served on respondent's counsel, Monica Sansalone, by electronic mail at msansalone@gallaghersharp.com on this 18th day of January 2025.

/s Joseph M. Caligiuri
Joseph M. Caligiuri (0074786)
Relator