

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION**

HALEY CROWE,
Plaintiff,

v.

WAYLAND BRAXTON WILLIS,
Defendant.

Civil Action File No.: 2025EDR0053

**DEFENDANT'S MOTION TO RECUSE AND REASSIGN
PURSUANT TO UNIFORM SUPERIOR COURT RULE 25.1**

I. INTRODUCTION AND TIMELINESS

COMES NOW Defendant Wayland Braxton Willis, appearing pro se, and respectfully moves this Court to recuse the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly, Chief Judge, Columbia County Superior Court, from further proceedings in Case No. 2025EDR0053, and to reassign this matter to another judge of the Columbia Judicial Circuit pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 25.1 and the Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 3E(1).

This Motion is timely filed pursuant to USCR 25.1. The operative basis for this Motion — Defendant's submission of a formal sworn complaint to the Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) against the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly — was completed on April 4, 2026. That filing constitutes a newly ripened, independent basis for recusal that did not previously exist in sworn and formally submitted form. This Motion is filed within five (5) days of that event and is therefore timely under USCR 25.1.

A sworn Affidavit in support of this Motion, establishing the factual predicate under USCR 25.1, is filed contemporaneously herewith.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Defendant is the respondent father in the above-captioned domestic relations modification proceeding, which has been pending before the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly since January 17, 2025. The Defendant's minor child, born December 27, 2018, has been the subject of this proceeding. Since October 19, 2025, Defendant has had no in-person contact with his child and no communication of any kind since January 14, 2026.

Since November 18, 2025, Defendant has filed more than twenty-five (25) substantive motions and notices in Case No. 2025EDR0053. As of the date of this filing, not one of those motions has received a ruling, a scheduled hearing, or any substantive response from this Court.

The following proceedings, each directly involving the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly as a named adverse party or the subject of formal proceedings, are now active and of record:

1. Willis v. Jolly & Bell, No. CV126-056 (S.D. Ga.) — A complaint filed March 24, 2026 in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, Augusta Division, naming the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly as a Defendant in her official capacity under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging violations of Defendant's constitutional due process rights arising directly from this Court's conduct in Case No. 2025EDR0053.
2. Willis v. Jolly, No. 2026ECV0357 (Columbia County Superior Court) — A Petition for Writ of Mandamus filed March 11, 2026, naming the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly as the sole Respondent, arising from this Court's failure to rule on pending motions.
3. JQC Complaint (filed April 4, 2026) — Defendant submitted a formal sworn complaint to the Judicial Qualifications Commission against the Honorable Sheryl B. Jolly, alleging

violations of Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct Canons 1, 2, and 3, arising from (a) the 139-day failure to rule on pending motions; (b) entry of a Consent Order on opposing counsel's unilateral submission while Defendant's motions sat pending; and (c) execution of a Standing Order in Case No. 2026ECV0357 while serving as the named Respondent in that proceeding.

III. LEGAL STANDARD

Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 3E(1) provides that a judge shall disqualify herself in any proceeding in which her impartiality might reasonably be questioned. The standard is objective: whether a reasonable person, knowing all the facts, would harbor doubts about the judge's impartiality. *Mayor & Aldermen of City of Savannah v. Batson-Cook Co.*, 291 Ga. 114 (2012). The analysis does not turn on the judge's subjective intent or actual bias; it turns on the appearance of impartiality as assessed by a reasonable observer.

USCR 25.1 requires that a motion to recuse be accompanied by a sufficient affidavit setting forth the facts on which the motion is based. USCR 25.3 provides that upon receiving a timely and facially sufficient motion with supporting affidavit, the judge is prohibited from ruling on the substantive merits of the case and must refer the recusal determination to another judge. See *Birt v. State*, 256 Ga. 483 (1986).

IV. ARGUMENT

A. A Reasonable Person Would Question Judge Jolly's Impartiality.

Defendant is simultaneously prosecuting Judge Jolly in federal court under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, pursuing a state mandamus action naming her as the sole Respondent, and has now submitted a sworn ethics complaint against her to the Judicial Qualifications Commission. The question is not whether Judge Jolly actually harbors bias. The question is whether a reasonable person, fully

informed of these facts, would have confidence in the impartiality of a proceeding in which the presiding judge is simultaneously the federal defendant, the state mandamus respondent, and the subject of a pending JQC ethics investigation — all brought by the same litigant who appears before her.

The answer is no. The structural conflict here is not subtle or inferential. It is direct, adversarial, and documented by public court records and filed pleadings. No reasonable person could be confident that such a judge — however experienced and well-intentioned — can preside over this matter without the appearance of partiality. Canon 3E(1) requires disqualification under precisely these circumstances.

B. This Motion Is Facially Sufficient to Trigger the USCR 25.3 Freeze and Referral.

This Motion is timely, is accompanied by a sworn and notarized affidavit, identifies the specific legal and factual grounds for recusal, and cites the governing authority. Under USCR 25.3, upon receipt of a facially sufficient motion, Judge Jolly is required to temporarily cease acting on the merits of Case No. 2025EDR0053 and refer the recusal determination to another judge of this Circuit. Defendant respectfully requests that this Court comply with that procedural mandate.

Defendant does not challenge any ruling on the merits of the custody proceeding. Defendant does not request any particular outcome in the underlying case. Defendant requests only that the structural conflict identified herein be addressed by a judge whose impartiality cannot reasonably be questioned.

V. RELIEF REQUESTED

For the foregoing reasons, Defendant respectfully requests that this Court:

1. Temporarily cease acting on the substantive merits of Case No. 2025EDR0053 upon receipt of this Motion, as required by USCR 25.3;

2. Refer this Motion and the accompanying Affidavit to another judge of the Columbia Judicial Circuit for determination of whether recusal is warranted; and
3. Reassign Case No. 2025EDR0053 to a judge whose impartiality cannot reasonably be questioned.

Respectfully submitted this **6th** day of **April, 2026**,

Wayland B. Willis

Wayland Braxton Willis, Defendant Pro Se
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 6th day of April, 2026, I served a true and correct copy of the following documents upon all counsel of record and parties in the above-captioned matter by electronic service through PeachCourt e-filing where counsel is registered:

1. Defendant's Motion to Recuse and Reassign Pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 25.1; and
2. Affidavit of Wayland Braxton Willis in Support of Defendant's Motion to Recuse and Reassign.

Documents were served upon the following:

Adam D. Land, Esq.
Tisdale, Middleton & Land
Counsel for Plaintiff Haley Crowe
Via PeachCourt e-service

Respectfully submitted this **6th** day of **April, 2026**.



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