



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

June 15, 2023

Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement
Michigan Hall of Justice
925 W. Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48915

Dear Chief Justice Clement:

I'm aware of recent requests for an audit of the Judicial Tenure Commission ("JTC") by the Association of Black Judges of Michigan ("Association"), the Black Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, and the Detroit Branch of the NAACP, among others, related to claims of disproportionate disciplinary proceedings against black judges. The Association stated in its letter dated March 27, 2023, for example, that though the number of black judges in Michigan has remained at about 16 percent over the past twenty years, about 80 percent of the judges prosecuted by the Commission since 2020 have been black. However, I am also aware that information available to the public about judicial disciplinary proceedings is limited so there may be additional data not currently in our possession that's beneficial in helping answer some of the important questions being raised by these groups.

As you know, I care deeply about advancing equity and diversity across government, including on the bench, because I believe that a government that can better reflect its people, can better serve its people. I also understand the importance of transparency in our actions and accountability in our words in the pursuit of this goal. When we implement measures that foster transparency and accountability, we stimulate the public's engagement with – and confidence in – the workings of our state government. For those reasons, I wish to commend the recent decision to conduct an independent audit to better evaluate the claims of racial disparity at the JTC. Though I understand the judicial branch has full authority and autonomy in the administration of the court system, I wanted to write to recognize the importance of this issue and acknowledge the good work the court is doing to drive towards better diversity, equity, and inclusion in the administration of justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor