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SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON INDIGENT DEFENSE

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Wanda H. Carter, Interim Chief Appellate Defender

October 15, 2025

RECEIVED

Oct 20 2025

S.C. SUPREME COURT

Honorable Patricia A. Howard
Clerk, South Carolina Supreme Court
Post Office Box 11330
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Re: Request for Order of Substitute Counsel
Mark Lorenzo Blake v. The State
Appellate Case No. 2025-000420

Dear Ms. Howard:

On November 15, 2018, Mark Lorenzo Blake was convicted of attempted murder per jury trial held at the Charleston County General Sessions Court before Judge William P. Keesley, who sentenced him to life imprisonment. Mr. Blake appealed, and on June 9, 2021, the South Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed his conviction and sentence. See State v. Blake, Unpublished Opinion No. 2021-UP-201 (S.C. Ct. App. Filed June 9, 2021).

Mr. Blake filed a PCR action on February 16, 2022, and after an evidentiary hearing was held, an Order of Dismissal was filed on February 5, 2025, by Judge Jocelyn Newman therein denying his allegations of ineffective assistance of appellate counsel in the case. Blake appeared pro se at trial.

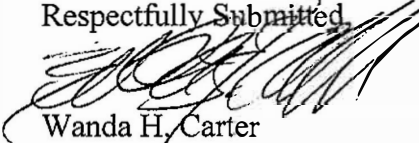
Mr. Blake's PCR appeal has been assigned to Assistant Appellate Defender Jessica M. Saxon; however, a conflict exists because he was represented on direct appeal by former Appellate Defender Taylor Gilliam, who was the subject of two ineffective assistance of appellate counsel claims raised in the case. Also, note that Attorney Gilliam testified at the PCR hearing in response to the allegations of ineffective assistance of appellate counsel, which included the alleged failure to brief a waiver of the right to counsel issue and a state docket control (speedy trial) question.

As a result, the PCR appeal in this case, which is presently in our office, presents a conflict with our office inasmuch as any staff attorney assigned to the case would be placed in the position of having to evaluate the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of another appellate defender's work product. Although Attorney Gilliam is no longer a staff attorney here, the goal is to avoid any impropriety or the **appearance of impropriety** that would suggest dual

representation and/or divided loyalties on appeal. Duncan v. State, 281 S.C. 435, 315 S.E.2d 809 (1984), citing to Cuyler v. Sullivan, 446 U.S. 335 (1980) and Zuck v. State of Alabama, 588 F.2d 436 (5th Cir. 1979). See also SCACR, Rule 407. Therefore, this is a request for an Order of Substitute Counsel to be issued in the above titled appeal, and that the appeal be held in abeyance as well.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wanda H. Carter', written over the typed name.

Wanda H. Carter
Interim Chief Appellate Defender

WHC/kw

cc: Danielle Dixon, Esq.

Bryan T. Hall, Esq.