



PRESS RELEASE

The 26th Judicial District of North Carolina

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STATEMENT FROM THE COURTS

Charlotte, NC – The ability of courts to fulfill their mission and perform their function in a civilized society is based on the public’s trust and confidence in the system. The judiciary earns public trust and confidence by faithfully performing its duties, adhering to ethical standards, and effectively carrying out internal oversight review and governance responsibilities. Yet, the National Center for State Courts reports that contact with the courts appears to make very little difference in court perception, as most opinions about the courts appears to come from the media, including news reports. False, inaccurate, and misleading news reports threaten the public’s understanding, use of and confidence in the courts.

On February 6, 2020, WBTV Chief Investigative Reporter, Nick Ochsner, made the following statement during his news report, “Judge Aretha Blake presided over 52 cases in 2017 – the year she took the bench – that are still waiting [sic] orders.” While on the air, Mr. Ochsner also featured a list of cases created by a Mecklenburg County Deputy Clerk assigned to Judge Blake’s courtroom. Because public trust and confidence is integral to our system of justice; and because public perception of our courts is influenced by the media, the courts are compelled to issue a statement that reflects the findings of our review of the cases referred to in the WBTV newscast.

The Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Court’s Office and Family Court Administrator’s Office performed a review of the fifty-two (52) cases and determined that every file contains an order entered by Judge Blake. In two (2) cases, orders were entered in 2020. Eight (8) cases have orders that were entered in 2019. All the other cases have orders were entered in 2018 and 2017, within months of the hearing. In 2017, Judge Aretha Blake presided over nearly 700 hearings and trials and over 1,000 child support cases. In 2018, Judge Blake presided over 950 hearings and trials and over 2,500 child support cases.

Through the collective work of all members of the judicial process, from judges to administrators to clerks, the courts stand committed to providing access to justice, equality, fairness and accountability.

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