

Exhibit No. 13Date: 3/24/2021Bill No. SR 46LAW OFFICE OF
JENNIFER KALECZYC

March 19, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana State Legislature
ATTN: Hon Keith Regier, Chair
PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to confirm the appointment of Christopher D. Abbott as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District. As an attorney, he earned a reputation for being hard-working and persuasive advocate for his clients, known for his thorough knowledge of the law. On the bench, Judge Abbott has demonstrated the qualities we all desire in a judge. He is fair, impartial, reasoned, and efficient.

Judge Abbott has lived most of his life in Helena and has broad community support. In fact, over 130 people wrote letters in support of his appointment when he was before the Judicial Nomination Commission. Our community agrees resoundingly that Judge Abbott is the right person for the job.

Failure to confirm Judge Abbott would be a loss for the judicial system and create an even bigger backlog in our already overburdened courts. It would be especially harmful because he is the judge for the First Judicial Treatment Court and has been working successfully to address issues of addiction that overwhelm our community and courts.

Please vote to confirm the appointment of Judge Abbott to the bench.

Jenny Kaleczyc

From: "Christopher Abbott" <cdabbott10@gmail.com>
To: "efbartlett@charter.net" <efbartlett@charter.net>
Cc:
Bcc:
Priority: Normal
Date: Monday March 22 2021 7:27:00PM
Fwd: Confirmation of First Judicial District Court Judge Christopher Abbott

A few last ones, just came in now.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Mary Cochenour** <mary@gaiagps.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 22, 2021 at 5:35 PM
Subject: Confirmation of First Judicial District Court Judge Christopher Abbott
To: <cdabbott10@gmail.com>

Dear Chairman and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I write today to ask you to confirm Judge Christopher Abbott's appointment to the First Judicial District Court.

I am a former prosecutor of almost 13 years. I worked first as a Deputy Country Attorney in Lewis and Clark County and later as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Montana under the Bullock and Fox administrations. I have prosecuted almost every kind of case, from worker's compensation fraud to homicide, to sexual abuse of children. Before becoming a prosecutor, I was a public defender in the First Judicial District. In fact, that is where I first met Judge Abbott. We both started as Assistant Public Defenders on the same week in 2007, working with indigent clients in downtown Helena's courthouse.

I was also one of three finalists for the judicial appointment that Judge Abbott now occupies. Of course, I had hoped that I would be selected for the position, but I completely understood why the former governor appointed Judge Abbott to the bench. Chris Abbott has an impeccable character, a dedication to the law, and deep ties to the Helena community, having been raised here. He would clearly win any election within the First Judicial District. It came as no surprise to me that Chris Abbott received the judicial appointment, fair and square, based on these qualities.

In addition, I have always known Chris Abbott to be hardworking, fair, patient, reasonable, and level-headed. I say this both as his former coworker, opposing counsel on many cases, and competitor in the judicial selection process. Mr. Abbott possesses every character trait required of a District Court Judge.

Your decision on this matter goes far beyond Mr. Abbott's qualifications and directly impacts the First Judicial District's citizens. The entire courthouse is straining to keep up with a tidal wave of criminal cases, dependent and neglect proceedings, and involuntary mental health commitments. The First Judicial District's Treatment Court, a program that I helped create in 2011, hangs in the balance.

Judge Abbott's confirmation is in the best interest of the residents of Lewis and Clark, and Broadwater counties. Judge Abbott has served these communities for over four months now. He's already presided over treatment court, held criminals accountable for their behavior, and decided civil matters on the court's 900-case backlog. A disruption in Mr. Abbott's service would be a complete disservice to the public, causing an unnecessary delay in justice.

For these reasons, I urge you to confirm Christopher Abbott's appointment to the First Judicial District.

Best Regards,
Mary Cochenour, Esq.
Helena, MT
mary.cochenour@gmail.com

February 23, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana State Legislature
ATTN: Hon. Keith Regier, Chair
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

We are all judges within the First Judicial District, serving Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties, and we are writing to strongly urge that you confirm Judge Christopher D. Abbott to serve the remainder of his term through 2022.

We support Judge Abbott's confirmation first and foremost because he has the characteristics of an excellent judge. We have worked with Judge Abbott both as an attorney and as a colleague (and some of us as opposing counsel), and we know him to be fair-minded, thoughtful, patient, compassionate, humble, and hard-working. As a lawyer, he was a zealous advocate for his clients but also fair and courteous to opposing counsel, witnesses, and victims. As a judge, he is likewise courteous and patient with the parties before him.

Although Judge Abbott has only been on the bench for three months, he has already proven himself to be an excellent jurist. Judge Abbott quickly took over the reins of the district's Adult Treatment Court and has ably managed the program. Judge Abbott inherited a significant backlog of cases, and yet he has already made strides to reduce that backlog. He has prioritized making timely decisions and making his courtroom run more efficiently. He recently adopted changes to his criminal case procedures to streamline criminal cases and reduce the number of hearings necessary. He has acted impartially and made thoughtful rulings. He has also demonstrated a respect for the Constitution and the rule of law, including respect for the separation of powers and the different roles of the executive and legislative branches of government.


The First Judicial District Court is one of the busiest districts in the state. In 2020, the district court had 7,473 new cases filed, second only to the Thirteenth Judicial District. Judge Abbott alone now carries over 830 active cases. Should the seat remain vacant for several months, we believe the case backlog would grow to an unmanageable degree, a frustrating reality for those our courts serve.


Judge Abbott has proven himself to be an impartial and efficient judge, and we recommend that the Senate endorse his continuation in that role until he faces the voters next year. Based on his record to date, we fully expect the Senate will not regret doing so.


Sincerely,



HON. MIKE MENAHAN
District Court Judge, Department 1



HON. MICHAEL F. McMAHON
District Court Judge, Department 2

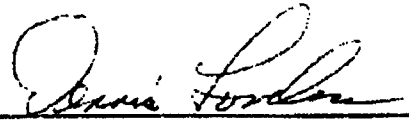

HON. KATHY SEELEY
District Court Judge, Department 1


HON. ANNE PETERSON
Helena Municipal Court Judge


HON. MICHAEL G. SWINGLEY
Justice of the Peace
Lewis & Clark County


HON. MARK V. PISKOLICH
Justice of the Peace
Lewis & Clark County


HON. KIRK FLYNN
Justice of the Peace
Broadwater County
Townsend City Court Judge


HON. DENNIS LOVELESS
East Helena City Court Judge

analysis when he was an Assistant Attorney General and I have no doubt that he will do the same as a judge.

My response to a colleague who recently drew Judge Abbot on a case in the First Judicial District perhaps sums it up best. When my colleague asked what I thought about the assignment, I responded: "He's very smart, and he'll apply the law to the facts fairly. What more could you want? That's a good draw."

I encourage you to confirm Judge Abbott's appointment to the First Judicial District.

Best regards,



Dale Schowengerdt

BRETT P. CLARK
3 STACIA LANE
MONTANA CITY, MT 59634
(612) 203-0970
BPCLARK.ESQ@GMAIL.COM

March 2, 2021

Judiciary Committee
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: Judge Christopher Abbott

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Brett Clark and I am a partner practicing in the Helena office of Crowley Fleck PLLP. I submit this comment on behalf of myself personally and not on behalf of my firm.

I write to ask that the committee and the Senate as a whole confirm Judge Christopher Abbott to the bench in the First Judicial District. I have known Chris for more than twenty years, dating back to high school debate competitions here in Montana. Back then, Judge Abbott was considered one of the strongest and most formidable debaters in the state. After high school, he and I would continue to encounter each other at college debate tournaments around the Northwestern U.S. I have always known Judge Abbott to be intelligent, thoughtful and considerate. After college, he enjoyed success in law school, graduating in the top five percent of his class.

While Judge Abbott has the temperament and intellect to serve the First Judicial District well, his diverse practice background will also be a tremendous benefit. Judge Abbott spent most of his career in criminal law as a public defender but spent the years prior to his appointment working in civil practice with the Montana Attorney General's Legal Services Division. His experience on both sides of the law will be of tremendous benefit to him as a judge. Attorneys and parties appearing before Judge Abbott will always be able to count on a fair hearing of their case.

While I believe Judge Abbott is the right person for the job, I also worry about the effect that declining to confirm will have on the existing backlog of cases in the First Judicial District. COVID-19 has strained the system, especially the civil docket. Starting the process over is not in the interest of the people of Lewis and Clark and Broadwater counties, especially when a qualified, dynamic judge is doing the job right now.

Judge Abbott is and will continue to be a considerate, hard-working, and fair-minded judge. I hope you see fit to confirm him.

Very truly yours,



Brett P. Clark

KAYLEIGH N. MORINE
756 S. CALIFORNIA ST
HELENA, MT 59601
406.490.8407
KNBROWN22@GMAIL.COM

March 8, 2021

Judiciary Committee
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: Judge Christopher Abbott

Dear Members of the Committee:

As an attorney in Helena, I write in support of Judge Christopher Abbott and request the Committee and Senate confirm Judge Abbott to the bench in the First Judicial District.

I have not yet had an opportunity to appear in front of Judge Abbott, but I am familiar with him through his support of legal education amongst Montana's youth. Specifically, my husband and I work with the Montana Mock Trial program. Last year, the program held its first competition. Judge Abbott took time to assist and judge competition rounds. This year when the program needed competition judges again, Judge Abbott was one of the first judges to sign up, despite his busy schedule.

Judge Abbott had significant support for his nomination. Moreover, Judge Abbott is helping fill a vital role due to the backlog of cases as a result of the COVID pandemic. Delaying nomination of a judge in the First Judicial District would only further increase that backlog and the burden on the three other Judges in the First Judicial District. Judge Abbott is well-qualified and is working to serve the citizens of the First Judicial District. Please advance his confirmation.

Sincerely,



Kayleigh N. Morine



Montana Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana State Legislature
State Capitol
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

February 24, 2021

Dear Senators,

First Judicial District CASA/GAL Program is a local nonprofit agency whose purpose is to recruit, train and provide volunteers who are appointed by the Court to represent the best interest of children in foster care. We work closely with each of the four judges on the First Judicial District.

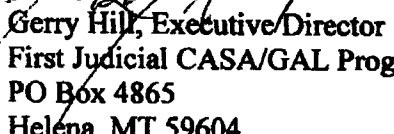
We are writing in support of the appointment of Judge Christopher Abbott to the First Judicial District Court. Judge Abbott has extensive knowledge of Dependent Neglect proceedings. He has represented many parents in Dependent Neglect cases before being appointed to the bench.

For children in foster care, it is important that the Court provide timely disposition of their cases. The statute sets timelines for reunification. If efforts toward reunification fail, the children need safe, permanent homes in a timely manner. Removing Judge Abbott would cause another disruption in the continuity of cases before this court.

In this court, following the retirement of Judge James Reynolds, an interim Judge McLean served for several months until Judge Abbott was appointed. The families in this court have experienced three judges in just a few months. It is not in the best interest of the children CASA serves to have another disruption in this court.

CASA volunteers have experienced Judge Abbott to be efficient, deeply concerned about the children and families under his jurisdiction and knowledgeable with regard to dependent neglect law. We support Judge Abbott's continuing service on the bench. We strongly believe this would be in the best interest of the children we serve.

Sincerely,



Gerry Hill, Executive Director
First Judicial CASA/GAL Program, Inc.
PO Box 4865
Helena, MT 59604
ghill@helenacasa.org
(406) 457-0797

PO Box 4865 Helena, MT 59604

406-457-0797



A United Way Agency

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

We are writing this letter on behalf of Judge Christopher D. Abbott of the First Judicial District. Since his appointment to the bench, he has been a fair and impartial judge who has not been swayed by personal politics or his own idea of what the law should be. We urge you to confirm his judicial appointment.

First and foremost, Judge Abbott is a scholar of the law. He is a graduate from the University of Washington School of Law, where was a member of the Washington Law Review and ultimately graduated with high honors. He then served as a clerk for Judge Browning on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Court. After that time, he took a job with the Office of Public Defender (OPD) in Helena. During his ten years with OPD, he was hand-picked to work on the Major Crimes Division, which involved the most severe criminal cases throughout the State of Montana. As such, Judge Abbott held the distinction of being one of the few public defenders in the state qualified to litigate capital punishment cases, which would absolutely benefit him should a capital case be filed in this jurisdiction.

While his excellent reputation as a public defender was well known throughout Montana, Judge Abbott also has experience working as a prosecutor. Prior to his appointment, he was an assistant attorney general for the Montana Department of Justice. While at the DOJ, he worked on complex civil cases and also acted as a prosecutor on a number of criminal cases. Simply put, Judge Abbott's experience should not be viewed as "just" that of a public defender. His experience spans not just criminal defense, but criminal prosecution and civil law. This experience has certainly benefitted him on the bench thus far.


Judge Abbott inherited a very large caseload upon his appointment to the bench. In the time he has been presiding over his court, he has found numerous ways to alleviate some of the crowding on the court's docket. This has involved revising the way criminal omnibus hearings are conducted in his court. In addition, he has implemented new ideas for handling Youth in Need of Care hearings. All of these changes have, in fact, reduced the strain on his Court and other judges in the First Judicial District are adopting the same practice he has imposed. It's been quite impressive to see this develop in the short time he has been on the bench.


Most importantly, however, Judge Abbott has been dedicated to the First Judicial District Treatment Court. This has been a difficult year for the participants in treatment court. While dealing with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, they also had to endure losing Judge James Reynolds, who created the First Judicial District Treatment Court and was beloved by the participants. They then worked with Judge Ed McLean, who they liked very much, but it was obvious that Judge Reynolds was greatly missed. When Judge Abbott was sworn in, he was well aware of the challenges he faced. He has risen to that challenge and has led the Treatment Court with a strong, yet compassionate, hand. He has had no difficulty integrating himself into the Treatment Court team. The participants like him, respect him, trust him, and are doing exceptionally well under his leadership. We would hate to see these folks, who are already doing their best to maintain sobriety and improve their lives, have another yet disruption in their lives to get acquainted with yet another judge.

Judge Abbott runs his Court with a fair and impartial hand. He is not swayed by his own personal passions or prejudices. He follows the law as it is written and we have no doubt that he will continue to do so. He has been an excellent trial judge and has made fair and impartial rulings. Honestly, he has done an exceptional job in the short time he has been on the bench. It would be a disservice to the people of Lewis and Clark County to remove him at this time. Please confirm his appointment.

Sincerely,

Ann B Penner  Ann B Penner, Deputy County Attorney | Treatment Court team, L+C Co.

 Jasmine Newman, Treatment Court Participant, L+C Co.

 Layla Eichler, Treatment Court Coordinator, L+C Co.

Christine Zadra, Office of the Public Defender | Treatment Court team, L+C Co.

Jaimie Szlanko, Probation officer | Treatment Court team, L+C Co.

Eichler, Layla

From: jennifer munger <jenmunger1023@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 5, 2021 5:27 PM
To: Eichler, Layla
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Judge Abbott

My name is Jennifer Munger,

I am a participant in the Helena Drug Treatment Court Program and work with Judge Chris Abbott on a weekly basis. Judge Abbott has been an amazing judge through treatment court.

Through my time in treatment court I've had my fair share of problems and mess ups. Judge Abbott has been very strict with my disciplinary actions. But he's also been one of the most encouraging people in my recovery. He is very fair when it comes to the trouble I've been in and his choices of my consequences have been such big learning steps for me. I would like to see Judge Abbott stay as our judge, for he does an amazing job.

Eichler, Layla

From: Dwight Pierson <lionsfan406@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 4, 2021 8:10 PM
To: Eichler, Layla
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Judge Abbott

My name is Dwight Pierson and I am a participant in the adult treatment court program. I would just like to say for the record that Judge Abbott is a very fair judge who has done his job well. Thank you for your time Sent from my iPhone

< Victoria, Lac... (15) 15 recipients




judge
Abbott

MMS
2:50 PM



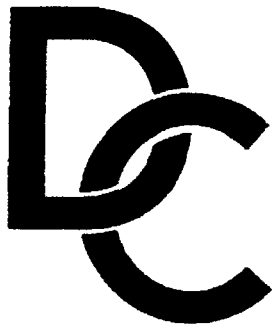
Cole

I don't have
email but
I am in
treatment
court an I
think that
he is a fair
judge 

Tyler Cole

MMS
2:57





DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Mac M. Smith, LL.M.
Jack G. Connors
Cindy D. Brooks
Marc G. Buyske, LL.M.
Samuel J. King
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Mark A. Thieszen
Frank C. Crowley, MS

February 16, 2021

Montana Senate Judiciary Committee
Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

RE: Confirmation of District Judge Christopher Abbott

Members of the Committee:

The undersigned attorneys in the Doney Crowley, P.C., law firm urge you to confirm the appointment of Judge Christopher Abbott as District Judge of the First Judicial District Court, Lewis and Clark County, Montana. We strongly believe Judge Abbott is a well-qualified appointee and jurist based upon his legal background and his actions since assuming the bench. Furthermore, if Judge Abbott is not confirmed, after having served months as District Judge, the vacancy in the First Judicial District Court created by the failure to confirm, will cause an increased workload for the remaining First Judicial District judges as well as delay and hardships for those seeking remedy in our Court. Finally, if there is a concern with Judge Abbott's appointment by a previous administration (and there should not be), the voters of this Judicial District will have the opportunity to express their opinion when Judge Abbott is up for election.

Thank you for your consideration and, once again, we urge the Committee to confirm Judge Abbott.

Sincerely,

Frank C. Crowley
Mac M. Smith
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Cindy D. Brooks
Samuel J. King
Marc G. Buyske

JACKSON MURDO & GRANT, P.C.

**NATHAN BILYEU
ERIN LYNDES
SEAN SLANGER
SCOTT M. SVEE
BURT W. WARD
MURRY WARHANK**

**ATTORNEYS AT LAW
203 North Ewing Street
Helena, MT 59601**

**OF COUNSEL
ROB CAMERON
TERRY B. COSGROVE
DAVE DALTHORP
GREGORY G. GOULD
JOHN H. GRANT
DAVID L. JACKSON
JACQUELINE T. LENMARK
ROBERT M. MURDO**

February 11, 2021

**Sen. Keith Regier
1078 Stillwater Road
Kalispell, MT 59901**

Re: Confirm Judge Abbott to 1st Judicial District


Dear Senator Regier:

We, the attorneys of Jackson, Murdo & Grant, P.C. ("JMG"), write to strongly encourage the Senate Judiciary Committee to confirm Judge Christopher Abbott, who has been appointed to serve in the First Judicial District. JMG is a full-service law firm that has been based in Helena for more than half a century. We serve clients of all stripes, from Fortune 500 companies to local businesses, to Montana cities and towns, to individuals. We represent our clients in the First Judicial District daily.


When Judge Abbott took the bench, there was a significant backlog of civil cases in his department. The practical effect of this backlog was to delay resolution of legal disputes, sometimes for years. This was annoying for attorneys, but often very difficult for our clients. Judge Abbott has prioritized addressing this backlog, which has led to good progress clearing it. We have heard glowing reports regarding Judge Abbott's performance from Court staff and fellow serving and retired judges.


It would not be in the interests of Montanans to have another Judge appointed to this seat at this time. If Judge Abbott is not confirmed, there will be four judges in that Department in a year. This would, at best, hurt the progress Judge Abbott has made in clearing the backlog. Indeed, turnover could forfeit the gains made. The voters will soon have an opportunity to determine who will have this seat. We urge you to allow Judge Abbott to continue with the excellent work he has done this far and Lewis and Clark County's voters to choose his successor.

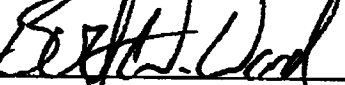
The Attorneys of JMG

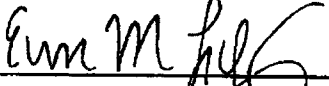

Murry Warhank



Nathan Bilyeu

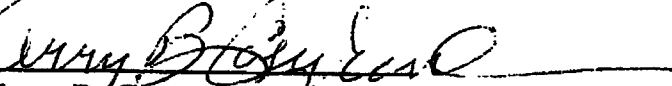

Sean Slanger



Scott M. Svec

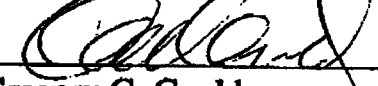

Burt W. Ward

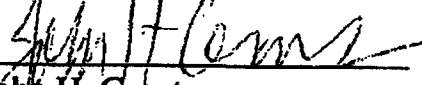

Erin M. Lyndes

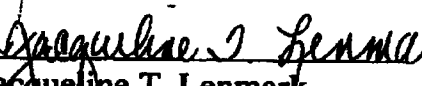

Rob Cameron

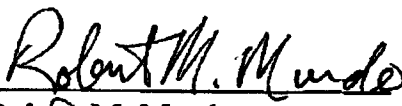

Terry B. Cosgrove

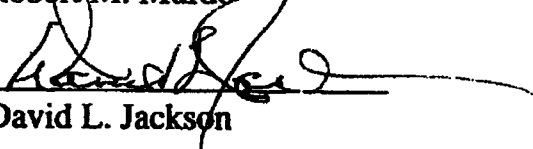

Dave Dalthorp


Gregory G. Gould


John H. Grant


Jacqueline T. Lenmark


Robert M. Murdo


David L. Jackson

March 5, 2021

**SUBJECT: CONFIRMATION OF CHRISTOPHER ABBOTT
TO FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT**

**Sen. Keith Regier, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706**

Dear Senator Regier:

Our firm submits this letter in support of the confirmation of Christopher Abbott to the First Judicial District Court. We believe Judge Abbott is fully qualified and well-suited to meet the needs facing the First Judicial District for the reasons that follow.

Most attorneys spend their careers focusing on either criminal or civil law, which creates a significant learning curve if they become judges. Judge Abbott has a blend of civil and criminal law experience that is unique among attorneys. For ten years, he worked as a public defender representing indigent clients. He became qualified to handle the most complex cases involving the most serious crimes, including capital cases. During his time in the Office of Public Defender, he traveled to various courtrooms and appeared before numerous judges. He has significant trial experience that serves him well on the bench.

Judge Abbott also gained civil experience in a range of areas while working for the Montana Department of Justice. He handled litigation in a variety of areas that are commonly presented to courts for resolution, including contract disputes, malpractice claims, employment matters, civil rights cases, and constitutional matters. Judge Abbott's combination of criminal, civil, and trial experience has given him a significant head start in becoming a judge and has allowed him to assume the role with a firm foundation in the processes and litigated matters handled by a Montana trial court judge.

In addition to Judge Abbott's experience, he also has a demonstrated commitment to public service. His entire legal career has been devoted to service, from his decade as a



Sen. Keith Regier

March 5, 2021


Page 2 of 2

public defender to his more recent employment representing the State of Montana in a variety of litigated matters. He has also served on the Helena Area Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors. His willingness to serve the First Judicial District as a judge is a continuation of this commitment to his community through service to others.

Finally, Judge Abbott's confirmation is essential to stability and efficiency in the First Judicial District. When Judge Abbott was appointed to the Court in late 2020, Judge Reynolds had just retired, and there was a serious backlog of cases that needed attention. The judges in the district worked diligently and cooperatively to address the backlog, including obtaining the assistance of retired Judge McLean from Missoula and even rehearing matters for which orders had not yet been issued. The First Judicial District has since regained its footing, but it requires continuity on the bench to maintain stability. If Judge Abbott is not confirmed, some parties may have their cases reviewed by four judges in a relatively short period of time (Judge Reynolds, interim Judge McLean, Judge Abbott, and a new judge). This type of change can create inefficiencies and, more importantly, confusion for parties. This is especially problematic in cases in which continuity is critical, such as in parenting, dependency and neglect, and Treatment Court matters.

Judge Abbott brings a steady hand and extensive relevant experience to the First Judicial District Court. Our firm urges you to confirm Judge Abbott so he can continue his service to Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties.

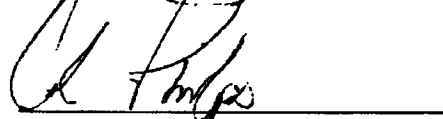
Sincerely,



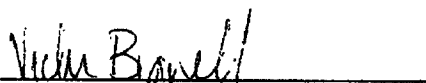
Amy D. Christensen



Cherche Prezeau



Colin Phelps



Vicki Bignell

HATTERSLEY MORINE, PLLP
Attorneys at Law

THOMAS E. HATTERSLEY, III
DAVID C. MORINE
JOCK O. ANDERSON (Of Counsel)
JEFFREY M. HINDOIEN (Of Counsel)

33 SOUTH LAST CHANCE GULCH, SUITE 1A
HELENA, MONTANA 59601

MAILING ADDRESS:
P.O. BOX 1731
HELENA, MONTANA 59624-1731

TELEPHONE (406) 442-8560

February 25, 2021

VIA HAND-DELIVERY
Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

RE: *Letter of Support – Confirmation of Judge Christopher Abbott*

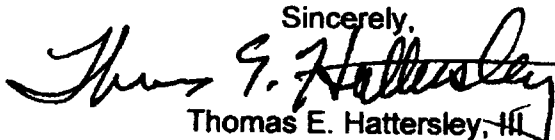
Dear Committee Members:

We are writing to urge the Committee's confirmation of the appointment of Chris Abbott to serve as a District Court Judge here in the First Judicial District.

District Judges serve as the foundation blocks for the administration of justice in our communities. Along with our local law enforcement officials, they play a critical role in our criminal justice system. They are likewise called upon to resolve the difficult family law and civil litigation matters that arise here in our community.

Raised and educated here in Helena, Judge Abbott brings a very strong community linkage with him to the bench. He also brings a depth of criminal law and civil law experience to the bench that was unique to the pool of applicants for the position to which he has been appointed. As members of the legal community here in Helena, we believe he will be a valuable addition to the First Judicial District bench and urge your confirmation of his appointment as one of our District Court Judges.


Sincerely,


Thomas E. Hattersley, III

Sincerely,


David C. Morine

Sincerely,


Jock O. Anderson

Sincerely,


Jeffrey M. Hindoiem

UDA LAW FIRM, P.C.

ATTORNEY AT LAW

MICHAEL J. UDA, J.D., MS
ANNA KECSKES, J.D.
COLSON R. WILLIAMS, J.D.
LOWELL J. CHANDLER, J.D.

7 WEST 6TH AVENUE
POWER BLOCK SUITE 615
HELENA, MT 59601
PHONE: (406) 457-5311
E-MAIL: michaeluda@udalaw.com

Senate Judiciary Committee
Chairman Keith Regier

March 1, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The Uda Law Firm, P.C. is writing this letter in support of the Honorable Chris D. Abbott. Judge Abbott is currently serving as a district court judge within the First Judicial District Court of Montana, after being appointed by former Governor Steve Bullock. He and two other district court judges were appointed by the former governor, but have not yet been confirmed by Montana legislature, pending the outcome of current Senate Bill 140.

We would urge this Committee to confirm Judge Abbott and the other appointees without further delay. Judge Abbott went through a rigorous screening process before the Judicial Nomination Committee before being appointed, and is more than qualified for the position he currently serves in. Since being sworn in, he has thrown himself into the busy case load of a district court judge, including serving as the treatment court judge for this District.

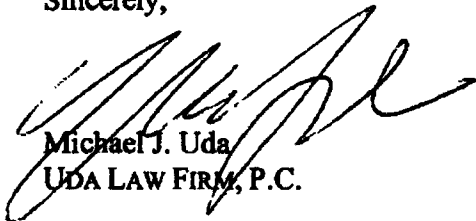
District court judges oversee a wide-ranging and busy case-load; every judge must hear their share of criminal cases (through all stages of the proceedings, from arraignment or initial appearances and bond hearings to sentencing), family law cases (divorce, custody, guardianship issues), dependency and neglect cases (cases where Child and Family Services take custody of a child), civil commitments (where a person may be involuntarily committed for mental health reasons), and commercial litigation (more "traditional" lawsuits of two or more parties suing one another). Typically, district court judges are "on the bench" or holding court every single day of the week to manage this case load. When Judge Abbott is not actively holding court (in hearings or trials), for every case on his docket, he and his staff have to read the procedural requests and briefing from the parties, research the legal issues and law cited by the parties, and produce written decisions. There are many other aspects of being a judge as well, but

the day-to-day tasks of being a judge involve keeping on top of the constant stream of paperwork and procedural issues that are necessitated by each active case.

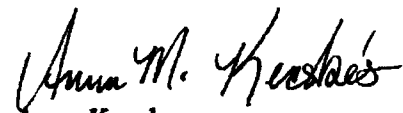
If Judge Abbott (or the other judicial appointments) were to vacate his position without a replacement, the entire case load assigned to him would be put on hold until that position were to be filled. Even once filled, a new district court judge would have to be brought up to speed in handling a full case load, in addition to getting up to speed on the cases that were abruptly put on hold due to Judge Abbott's vacatur imposed by SB 140. Judge Abbott, from his many years working as a public defender and his time as an Assistant Attorney General at the Montana Department of Justice, is well aware of the problems associated with having a backlog of cases and parties who have been waiting to have their cases be heard and opinions/orders issued in a timely manner.

The Uda Law Firm typically represents clients in proceedings in front of the Montana Public Service Commission, and the few cases that we have in the First Judicial District are typically appeals from the orders of the Montana Public Service Commission. Montana law dictates that certain types of cases take precedence over more general civil lawsuits (where our cases would generally fall). While we certainly understand that criminal defendants who are jailed or parents who are waiting to see their children are more pressing than our cases, it is already difficult to be scheduled for a hearing or to get final orders for our clients. The First Judicial District does not need any further delay or backlog due to an unexpected vacancy for a judge's position, and we heartily encourage you to confirm Judge Abbott without delay.


Sincerely,



Michael J. Uda
UDA LAW FIRM, P.C.



Anna M. Kecskes
Anna Kecskes
UDA LAW FIRM, P.C.



Colson R. Williams
UDA LAW FIRM, P.C.



Lowell J. Chandler
UDA LAW FIRM, P.C.



CURT DRAKE
~Selected to the American Board of Trial Advocates~
curt@drakemt.com

MICHAEL A. KAUFFMAN
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SARAH MAZANEC
sarah@drakemt.com

PATRICIA KLANKE
patricia@drakemt.com

DARANNE DUNNING
daranne@drakemt.com

111 North Last Chance Gulch
Suite 31, Arcade Building
Helena, MT 59601

PHONE: (406) 495-8080
FAX: (406) 495-1516

February 5, 2021

Honorable Keith Regier
Chair of Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Senator Regier:

Our firm is writing in support of the confirmation of Chris Abbott as First Judicial District Judge. We have worked with Mr. Abbott for many years, and in our experience, Mr. Abbott is highly professional, intelligent, and efficient. Mr. Abbott is dedicated to the rule of law, recognizing that his primary duty is to apply existing law, not legislate from the bench.

Mr. Abbott has always been a dedicated and fair-minded public servant. Mr. Abbott's diverse legal background, with extensive experience in criminal, civil, and administrative law, makes him uniquely suited to the judgeship. Mr. Abbott is capable of understanding and efficiently managing the diversity and volume of cases that confront him as a judge. He is a creative thinker and a skilled and efficient writer.

Mr. Abbott has shown on his short time on the bench that he is an effective, fair and capable judge. Our firm recommends that he be confirmed as a First Judicial District judge.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

DRAKE LAW FIRM, P.C.

By: 
Curt Drake

Wall, McLean & Gallagher, PLLC

a Montana law firm

Stefan T. Wall* • Michael D. McLean • Patrick T. Gallagher
Denny K. Palmer • Jayme J. Hill • Rebekah E. Schaefer • Lindsay P. Ward

February 3, 2021

Hon. Keith Regier
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana Senate
P.O. Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: Honorable Christopher Abbott

Dear Senator Regier:

On behalf of the attorneys that comprise Wall, McLean & Gallagher, PLLC, I am writing to urge you to confirm Christopher Abbott to the First Judicial District Court. Collectively, the attorneys at our firm have nearly 100 years in practice in the state and federal courts of Montana. Several of our attorneys have clerked for judges in the Montana state and federal courts. We have represented a broad array of Montana clients, including individuals, small businesses, governmental entities, estates, professionals and Fortune 500 companies in matters ranging from adoption and divorce to civil rights and class action defense, to land use and zoning.

From this perspective we are pleased that Judge Abbott was nominated to the bench in the First Judicial District amongst many qualified candidates. Judge Abbott has the necessary judicial background, having been ensconced in the criminal docket as a public defender, and with broad exposure to the civil dockets as a state's attorney. Most importantly, Judge Abbott has displayed, both before he took the bench and after, judicial temperament. This quality can be described as the ability to review and rule on each case in a fair, open minded and decisive manner so that each litigant is given a fair and transparent opportunity to present their case and receive a prompt and well-reasoned decision.

In my appearances before Judge Abbott, I have found him in possession of sharp legal mind and keen control of procedures (in particular for being so new to the bench), and equally valuable, in possession of good common sense. These are qualities we need in our district court judges.

As such, I and my colleagues urge you and the Judiciary Committee to promptly confirm Judge Abbott, and enable the citizens who avail themselves of the First Judicial Court to secure another high qualified and impartial member of our esteemed judiciary.

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Office Locations:

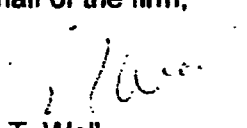
1 North Last Chance Gulch, Suite 4
P.O. Box 1713, Helena, MT 59624
Phone (406) 442-1054 • Fax (406) 442-6455

117 Main Street
P.O. Box 1413, Anaconda, MT 59711
Phone (406) 563-8409 • Fax (406) 563-8400

Hon. Keith Regier
February 3, 2021
Page 2

Please contact me if there is any further information you require or we can be of service in the confirmation process of Judge Abbott.

On behalf of the firm,



Stefan T. Wall
Managing Partner

LAW OFFICES

HOOVESTAL LAW FIRM, PLLC

TELEPHONE:
(406) 457-0970

PALMER A. HOOVESTAL
Admitted in Washington and Montana

608 LINCOLN RD. WEST

HELENA, MT 59602

POST OFFICE BOX 747

HELENA, MONTANA 59624-0747

FAX:
(406) 457-0475

E-MAIL:
palmer@hoovestallaw.com
shelley@hoovestallaw.com

February 4, 2021

PARALEGAL:
SHELLEY HOOVESTAL

Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana State Legislature
State Capitol, Rm. 303
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Re: Confirmation of Hon. Christopher Abbott.

Dear Committee Members:

I write to offer my full and enthusiastic support for the confirmation of Hon. Christopher Abbott as District Judge for the Montana First Judicial District. I am an attorney-at-law and regularly practice in state and federal courts litigating civil and criminal cases at both the trial and appellate levels. I am admitted to practice law in the following tribunals:

Court or Administrative Body	Date
Idaho State Bar (inactive)	4/19/90
Idaho Supreme Court	4/19/90
United States District Court for Idaho	4/19/90
United States District Court for the District of Montana	5/4/90
Washington State Bar	7/25/90
Washington Supreme Court	7/25/90
Montana State Bar	9/13/90
Montana Supreme Court	9/13/90
Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals	1/28/93
United States Supreme Court	8/13/93
United States District Court for the Western District of Washington	10/29/93
Court of Federal Claims	1/20/99
United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington	7/22/99
Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals	11/15/12

I have also been admitted to practice *pro hac vice* in trial courts in the states of Alabama, Arizona, California, Maryland, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. I have argued before state and federal appellate courts on at least 31 separate occasions.

I am a former President of the Montana Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. I received the Trial Lawyer of the Year award from MtACDL in 2011. I was also the 1998 recipient of the Trial Lawyer of the Year award by the Montana Trial Lawyers Association. I was nominated by the Judicial Nomination Commission to fill the District Judge position that was available in the Montana 22nd Judicial District eventually filled by Judge Blair Jones. I am also a registered member of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and the Gros Ventre Tribe.

I offer my full support for and without hesitation urge you to confirm the appointment of Christopher Abbott as District Judge of the Montana First Judicial District. I have had occasion over the course of many years to observe Chris' advocacy when he practiced law as an attorney. I have appeared in his court many times after he took the bench. Having had that experience, I sincerely believe that Judge Abbott has the trial and legal expertise that would make him a remarkably fine district court judge. He has an excellent judicial demeanor. He is patient, fair, unbiased and impartial. He is intimately acquainted with the rules of evidence, civil and criminal procedure, and well-versed in the substantive law. Judge Abbott has the legal mind, judicial demeanor, experience and wisdom – qualities that make an exceptional District Court Judge – and I recommend him with as much force and enthusiasm as the written word can muster.

I therefore unhesitatingly urge you to confirm his appointment as District Court Judge for the First Judicial District.

Very truly yours,



Palmer Hoovestal

LAW OFFICE OF MATHEW JOHNSON LLC

Mathew J. Johnson, Attorney

1085 Helena Avenue, Helena, MT 59601

Phone (406)442-3625 Email mathew@mtlegalcounsel.com Web Site www.mtlegalcounsel.com

Senator Keith Regier
Senate Judiciary Committee
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

February 10, 2021

Re: Confirmation of the First Judicial District Court Judge, Christopher Abbott

Dear Senator Regier and fellow committee members:

I am writing this letter in regards to the confirmation of the appointed District Court Judge for the First Judicial District, the Honorable Christopher Abbott. I am a practicing attorney in the First Judicial District and I have numerous cases before Judge Abbott.

It is my understanding that Judge Abbott's confirmation is before your Committee and is pending. I am writing in support of Judge Abbott's confirmation. He is more than capable as a Judge and has been timely and fair in his decisions on my client's cases before him. It is difficult to simply appoint an attorney and expect him or her to take on a large caseload and proceed efficiently and effectively, though Judge Abbott has done just that remarkably well. I respectfully request that he be confirmed and let the local community decide on whether Judge Abbott is retained at the next local election.

For your information the First Judicial District Court has a large backlog of cases. Having to switch Judges again at this juncture will be of no benefit to my clients, to those having pending cases within the District, nor the community.

For the best interest of the local community, please confirm the Honorable Christopher Abbott and allow him to go before the electors at the next election.

Sincerely,


Mathew Johnson

MAXON R. DAVIS
GREGORY J. HATLEY
PAUL R. HAFFEMAN
JOSEPH M. SULLIVAN*
STEPHANIE A. HOLLAR
TRAVIS A. CUSHMAN

DENNIS J. TIGHE
(Retired)

*Also admitted to practice in Oregon & Washington

LAW OFFICE OF
DAVIS, HATLEY, HAFFEMAN & TIGHE, P.C.
THE MILWAUKEE STATION, THIRD FLOOR
101 RIVER DRIVE NORTH
P. O. BOX 2103
GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59403-2103

TELEPHONE
(406) 781-8243
FAX
(406) 781-4126
E-Mail
max.davis@dhhtlax.com

FILE NO. 8054

February 12, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

Sen. Keith Regier
Montana State Senate
keith.regier@mtleg.gov

Re: *Confirmation of Judge Christopher Abbott*

Dear Senator Regier:

I understand that Judge Christopher Abbott, who was appointed to the district court bench in the First Judicial District last year, is up for a confirmation vote before the State Senate during this session.

Judge Abbott should unquestionably be confirmed as a district court judge. The citizens of Montana are fortunate to have someone of Chris Abbott's intellect and temperament willing to take on what is frequently not appreciated to be the at times thankless job of a state district court judge here in Montana.

I speak from some experience, having practiced law in Montana since 1976. The nature of my practice takes me all over the state – including your hometown of Kalispell, where you may have seen me at Flathead Electric's board meetings, for whom I serve as its outside general counsel. Besides Flathead Electric, I typically represent both in-state and out-of-state businesses and individuals. I also serve as one of the State of Montana's principal outside lawyers to defend the State on a wide variety of tort litigation.

I first met Chris Abbott wearing that last hat. For several years, he and I worked as co-counsel defending the University of Montana in a still-pending class action lawsuit. During the time that we worked together, Chris was an assistant attorney general, working in the Agency Legal Services Bureau of the Montana Department of Justice. When he was appointed to the bench, I was asked to take over an employment claim that he had been defending in federal court for several years as an ALS attorney. To say that his adversaries in that case over-litigated the issues would be an understatement. Nonetheless, that more recent assignment gave me a unique opportunity to see what kind of work Chris Abbott had done independent of me. I was tremendously impressed. It was obvious that Chris had grasped some pretty arcane legal concepts and had shown the grit and determination to put in considerable time to do first-class legal work on that case.

Sen. Keith Regier
January 12, 2021
Page 2

Before he went to work for the Attorney General, Chris Abbott worked as a public defender. That background also will serve him well as a district court judge, given that so much of what he does as a district judge calls repeatedly on that particular experience.

In that regard, I do not believe that many people appreciate the demands placed on our district judges' time. They of course have heavy criminal caseloads, and those criminal defendants' cases must be given speedy-trial priority. Then, there are the abused-and-neglected child cases, which likewise are required by law to be given priority. As I perhaps described the situation with some irreverence, there are the druggies and the kids of the druggies. That is what our judges spend so much of their time dealing with, from 8 AM to 5 PM. Then you can add in the crazy people who do not want to go to Warm Springs. Their cases must be given priority too. The frosting on that cake for a lot of our state court judges is their having to deal with all of the folks showing up without lawyers to get divorced.

So temperament is an important character attribute for Montana trial court judges. Chris Abbott has what I consider an ideal temperament for that work. He exudes patience and understanding. When one couples that temperament with a first-class intellect and a work ethic that is objectively impressive, Judge Abbott has everything that one can ask for as a state trial judge.

In stating as much, I know that there are some amongst us who are looking for a partisan angle to judicial appointments. To me, that is a fool's errand. There is nothing partisan at all about so much of the work done by judges, as I have described that work above. It has never mattered to me whether a judge is liberal or conservative or somehow has an "R" or a "D" associated with his or her name. What matters is that he or she will do the hard work of slogging through his/her very unglamorous docket, understand the cases which are before him/her and will do a good job resolving them fairly. With Judge Abbott, all of those boxes get checked.

You would be doing the citizens of Montana a great service by confirming Judge Abbott for the position that he now holds.

Very truly yours,

DAVIS HATLEY, HAFFEMAN & TIGHE, P.C.

BY

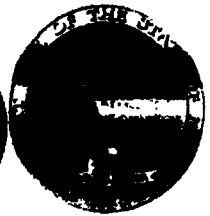


MRD:klw

cc: Hon. Christopher Abbott



Lewis & Clark
COUNTY
MONTANA



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Andy Hunthausen

Jim McCormick

Tom Rolfe

City County Building 316 North Park Helena, Montana 59623 406.447.8304 Fax: 406.447.8370

Montana Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairman Regier and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

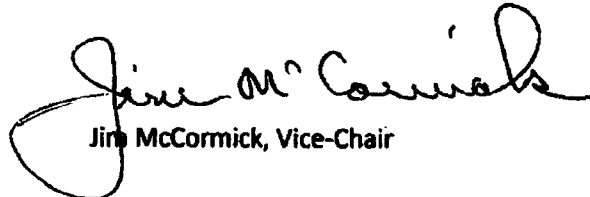
We are writing you to recommend the Senate Judiciary Committee approve the appointment of Judge Chris Abbott to the First Judicial District.

Judge Abbott is the third judge to hold this position in the past year since the retirement of Judge Reynolds. This district has experienced a year of inconsistency with cases being passed from one judge to another in midstream. By approving the appointment of Judge Abbott, the First Judicial District will continue to develop a pattern of consistency and stability related to case load and handling. If the Senate was not to approve the appointment of Judge Abbott, the First Judicial District will yet again experience another transition to a new judge and a situation of instability related to case completion and consistency.

It is likely that another transition would not serve the citizens of the First Judicial District well and would cause further delay in court proceedings and the completion of cases. For these reasons, we ask you to support the appointment of Judge Chris Abbott to the First Judicial District.

Sincerely,


Andy Hunthausen, Chair


Jim McCormick, Vice-Chair

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to you in support of Christopher Abbott to remain as Judge in the First Judicial District for Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties. I have had the privilege of working with Chris since he was first working for the State Public Defenders office and have watched him excel through his career. It is an honor now to have him serving on the Bench as one of our Honorable Judges.

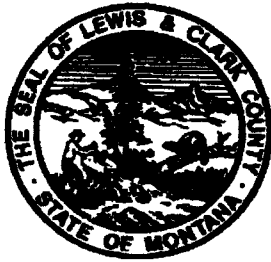
Thank you for your time and I hope that Christopher will remain on the Bench serving both Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties in the First Judicial District Court.

Sincerely,

Valerie J. Hornsveld

Valerie J Hornsveld

Broadwater County Clerk of District Court



ANGIE SPARKS
CLERK OF THE DISTRICT COURT
228 Broadway Avenue, Room #104
P.O. Box 158
Helena, MT 59624-0158
Voice (406) 447-8216
Fax (406) 447-8275
asparks@lccountymt.gov

March 2, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee
Hon. Keith Regier, Chair
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Members of the Committee:

I am the Lewis and Clark County Clerk of District Court, and I am writing you to urge that you confirm Judge Christopher Abbott to serve until the next election.

As a court of general jurisdiction, our court handles almost every type of case imaginable: adoptions, divorces, child custody disputes, probate, CPS cases involving abused or neglected children cases, involuntary mental health commitments, felony criminal cases, contract and property disputes, and civil lawsuits of all types. In recent years, the workload of the First Judicial District Court has grown immensely. Last year, there were 7,430 new case filings in Lewis and Clark County, which is second only to the new case filings in Yellowstone County. As a result, our four judges are among the busiest in the State. Judge Abbott alone has over 830 active cases at this moment. He has criminal trials scheduled through August 2021, and he has civil trials scheduled through March 2022.

It is a challenge to schedule hearings and trials in the thousands of cases passing through our court annually. Litigants have long complained about lengthy delays in getting hearings or decisions on their cases. Judge Abbott inherited a large backlog of cases when he took office. Since he took office, however, the time from submission of a case to decision has shrunk considerably and his backlog has improved tremendously. Judge Abbott has worked very hard to find efficiencies and give parties respectful, fair, and full consideration of their cases while also shortening the time they must wait for a decision.

In addition, I have known Judge Abbott for many years, and he is not only a talented attorney, but a humble, conscientious, and fair-minded person. He is always courteous

and treats the parties and lawyers who appear before him fairly. Since he's taken office, I've heard nothing but praise for his management of his court and his abilities as a judge.

Judge Abbott has been an asset to our community and to our court. Even though he is new, he has been exceptional. I express my sincere hope that the Senate will confirm him and allow him to stay in office through next year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angie Sparks". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Angie Sparks
Clerk of District Court
406-447-8215

March 2, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620
ATTN: Sen. Keith Regier

Senators:

I am writing you to ask that you confirm Judge Christopher D. Abbott.

I am the Lead Court Clerk/Bailiff in the Clerk's office, and I am currently Judge Menahan's scheduling clerk. I have known Judge Abbott since he was a public defender in our local office. He is well-known in the courtroom for not only being extremely intelligent, but for being well-mannered, polite, and fair to opposing lawyers and witnesses, despite the adversarial nature of the courtroom. He was always a zealous defender of his client's constitutional rights and had a great respect for the law.

None of that has changed since he became a judge. He inherited a massive caseload, but he has worked hard to make timely decisions. He treats parties fairly and impartially regardless of who they are, who they represent, or what they believe. He treats his staff and his courtroom scheduling clerk with respect, and he fosters a welcoming atmosphere in his courtroom while maintaining an appropriate judicial demeanor. Moreover, even though Judge Abbott is new, his experience has allowed him to jump right in with little of the learning curve that most new judges face.

Very little of the work our judges handle involves issues of political or statewide significance. Rather, they spend most of their time on family law, criminal cases, child abuse and neglect proceedings, and ordinary civil lawsuits, often between individuals or small businesses. Judge Abbott's weekly schedules are very full. Every Thursday is devoted entirely to criminal cases in the mornings; uncontested civil matters, after lunch, and child abuse and neglect hearings in the late afternoon. Every Tuesday afternoon, Judge Abbott presides over the drug treatment court. One Friday a week, Judge Abbott presides over court in Broadwater County. And the remaining days fill up with contested child custody hearings; restraining order hearings; contested child abuse and neglect hearings that would take too long to hear on Thursdays; civil commitment hearings; guardianship hearings; and oral argument in civil cases.

Judge Abbott must find time to make decisions on pending motions in the small spaces of time in between these hearings. And every time a trial is held, most hearings that were on the schedule must be rescheduled, filling up the schedule even further. This is difficult to manage under normal circumstances, but COVID-19 delays have caused a line of people waiting for trials and hearings. In fact, in the last four weeks, Judge Abbott has presided over three jury trials (two of which lasted the entire week), and he is currently presiding over a weeklong, high-profile arson trial. Each time a trial takes place, nearly all the hearings that were previously set that week get

rescheduled, making the schedule even more congested. Judge Abbott has hundreds of hearings scheduled between now and July, and he has a schedule that already extends to 2022.

Despite the challenges, Judge Abbott has done an excellent job of managing his courtroom and his caseload. I think his progress is to be commended, as it serves families, businesses, criminal defendants, victims, and children in foster care. More delays will create an unsettling limbo. I hope you vote to confirm Judge Abbott, as he's proven himself to be efficient, fair, and truly impartial.

Judge Abbott is doing a great job, and we need to keep him in place for now during this difficult time. I ask the committee to support his confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindi Colbert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindi Colbert
Deputy Clerk of Court
Lewis and Clark County

Suzanne Seburn
33 Sidewinder Loop
Clancy, MT 59634

Senate Judiciary Committee
Chairman Keith Regier

March 4, 2021

Senator Regier:

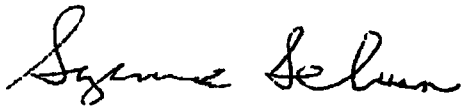
I am employed as the Regional Deputy for the Office of the State Public Defender for Lewis and Clark, Broadwater and Jefferson Counties. I am writing on behalf of myself in my personal capacity in support of the confirmation of Judge Christopher D. Abbott.

I had the good fortune of working with Judge Abbott from 2013 to 2017 when we were both employed in Helena at the Office of State Public Defender. During that time, I was consistently impressed with Judge Abbott's expansive knowledge of criminal law. Since that time, I am aware that Judge Abbott worked for the Attorney General's Office and gained considerable experience in civil law.

Since Judge Abbott's appointment to the bench, I have had the opportunity to appear in court before him as have many of the attorneys whom I supervise. I have observed him to exercise good and fair judgment and to possess proper judicial temperament. I am also aware, through my employment, that he created a new omnibus memorandum form and a new system of setting omnibus memorandum deadlines in lieu of omnibus hearings. This form and process have now been adopted by all of the judges in the First Judicial District for use in criminal matters in Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties. Judge Abbott took comments from the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office, the Broadwater County Attorney's Office, the Office of State Public Defender and the private defense bar when creating this memorandum. It has improved the efficiency of the courts by reducing duplicative filings and eliminating omnibus hearings unless specifically requested by the parties. Furthermore, in the relatively short time that Judge Abbott has been on the bench, I am aware of at least 4 criminal jury trials over which he has presided.

Judge Abbott is proving himself to be an excellent judge with a strong work ethic. I believe that the First Judicial District is very well served by his appointment to the bench and I strongly urge you to confirm his nomination. Failure to do so runs the very real risk of needlessly delaying proceedings that have already been delayed by the covid pandemic, to the further detriment of the parties and society. Even more significantly, the failure to confirm Judge Abbott's nomination will hurt the judiciary and citizens of the state of Montana who have a very good judge in Judge Abbott.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Seburn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Suzanne Seburn

Senate Judiciary Committee
Attn: Hon. Keith Regier, Chair
Helena, MT

February 20, 2021

To the Judiciary Committee:

I write to support the confirmation of Hon. Christopher Abbott for the First Judicial District. I am an active member of the First Judicial District bar, I worked alongside Judge Abbott while he was at the Attorney General's Office, and I have known him by reputation throughout his legal career.

I support Judge Abbott because, although our personal opinions may differ on many issues, I have always felt he was completely unbiased in his practice of law. True impartiality is hard for any human being to achieve, but Judge Abbott is one of the few people who is capable of it. Throughout his career, I have watched Judge Abbott approach a case based only on the facts and law. I have never seen him advocate for or adjudicate a single matter based on anything other than the law. He is respectful of others' opinions, open to new ideas, and he would never be an "activist judge." He treats everyone and every case the same, regardless of background or affiliation, and judges fairly, rationally, and impartially.

As I heard the Hon. Carolyn Ostby say when I clerked for her: "only when the rules are clear and enforced can you be sure of a fair hearing." Because Judge Abbott was one of the best litigators and trial attorneys I know, his command of the Rules of Evidence, Rules of Criminal Procedure, Rules of Civil Procedure, and Uniform District Court Rules is remarkable. Having tried so many cases throughout his career, he is able to recall rules and their nuanced applications off the top of his head. His extensive trial experience, and his deeply internalized knowledge of all the applicable rules make him the kind of judge we all hope to have—one who knows and works by the rules and only the rules.

Judge Abbott is also highly efficient and practical. In his short time on the bench he has already cleared a huge backlog of cases—something we desperately need in the First Judicial District (as resources are stretched to the maximum). His experience living through litigation as criminal and civil counsel also gives him an intimate awareness of what it is like to litigate cases and how important it can be to clients to get a well-reasoned decision quickly. Litigants always appreciate having someone on the bench who has lived their experience and understand the practicalities of litigation. Judge Abbott is hard-working and a committed public

servant (the kind that must actually be reminded to go home and stop working occasionally). His dedication and efficiency are invaluable to our District.

In addition to being a great lawyer, Judge Abbott is also just a wonderful human. He is compassionate, friendly, polite, and with the highest moral compass. He is very attuned to ethical issues in the practice of law and meticulous about adhering to his ethical obligations. Whether he is dealing with staff, pro-se inmates, members of the public, or opposing counsel, he is uniformly pleasant to work with. He has a very calming presence and always tends to de-escalate a difficult situation or work to find a solution, rather than increasing the tensions already inherent to an adversarial system. As a judge, he is just as even-keeled, respectful, compassionate, and professional regardless of who was appearing in front of him or how high the emotions were running. He is the consummate professional and I believe his demeanor is contagious in the courtroom in the best way.

I ask you to please confirm Judge Abbott for the First Judicial District.

Thank You

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah M. Clerget". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Sarah M. Clerget
First Judicial Bar Member

Kirsten K. Madsen

MadsenKirsten@aol.com

703 Eighth Avenue ☞ Helena, Montana 59601 ☎ 406.459.8685

March 7, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee
Attn: Hon. Keith Regier, Chair
Montana 67th Legislature

RE: Confirmation of Judge Christopher Abbott

Chairman Regier and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

It is my pleasure to offer this letter of support for your confirmation of Judge Christopher Abbott pursuant to Mont. Code Ann. § 3-1-1013. As you know, Judge Abbott was appointed to the bench of the First Judicial District in November 2020, following the retirement of Hon. James P. Reynolds.

I was Judge Reynolds' first law clerk, a position I took after clerking for two years in the Seventeenth Judicial District (Blaine, Phillips, and Valley Counties) for now-retired Hon. John C. McKeon. These positions gave me a unique perspective on the work and essential qualities of a judge. In every District Court case are individuals with lives bound up in the outcome—whether professionally, personally, financially, or otherwise—and awaiting resolution. The job is an unforgiving mix of people and questions needing to be heard fully and fairly, and a finite number of hours each day to accomplish that. Judge Abbott has the skill, the intellectual curiosity, and the even-handed personality needed to successfully and timely tackle the monumental and diverse workload.

Being an attorney myself, I have a keen interest in a judge's written work and courtroom management skills because they directly impact my clients and any decision being reviewed on appeal. I have observed Judge Abbott's work for over 10 years now, starting way back in a case from Valley County. His writing is always well-researched, tightly reasoned, and thoughtfully and faithfully applies the law. His style is straight forward and readable, a facet all the more important given the explosion of pro se parties in our courts. Judge Abbott also has an internalized knowledge of the technical aspects of the law, like rules of evidence, and employs a respectful command of a courtroom. These complimentary skills come from his unique background in both criminal and civil law, including the technicalities of administrative law frequently before the First Judicial District.

This observation from my letter supporting his nomination bears repeating for the Committee's purpose here: "As his colleague, I observe in Chris a dedication to the *profession* of law, as a set of practiced skills and constantly-acquired knowledge, applied with integrity and made useable for real people. As his friend, I know Chris to be brilliant, yes, but also approachable, funny, and comfortable with himself; he is patient with his daughter and genuine with his wife. It is hard to understate the value of subtle characteristics like these when you hold a position of power or authority—they instill a sense of trust, and I would trust Chris as a judge."

As evidenced by the overwhelming community support he received during the nomination process, Judge Abbott has the respect and trust of the district he serves. I urge you to confirm his appointment.

Sincerely,

/s/Kirsten Madsen

Kirsten K. Madsen

Michelle R. Dietrich
Office of the Montana State Auditor
840 Helena Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

March 4, 2021

State Capitol
Senate Judiciary Committee
Attn: Senator Keith Regier
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Confirmation of Judge Chris Abbott

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members,

I am writing in support of the confirmation of Judge Abbott to the First Judicial District Court. I have gotten to know Judge Abbott professionally and personally over the past several years and believe there is no one better suited for this role. I first worked with Judge Abbott as a colleague at the Department of Justice under former Attorney General Tim Fox. More recently, he served as outside counsel handling complex and important matters for the Office of the Montana State Auditor during my tenure as Chief Legal Counsel under former Commissioner of Securities and Insurance Matthew Rosendale. Throughout my professional relationship with Judge Abbott, I have thought he possesses the credentials, experience, and wisdom to be an asset to our local bench. I strongly believe he deserves the opportunity to continue in his current role.

Judge Abbott has knowledge that is expansive in both breadth and depth, a testament to the towering intellect for which he is well known. He is adept at administrative, civil, criminal, and appellate work. As an attorney at the Department of Justice, Abbott could spend the morning drafting a brief for a complex constitutional issue, move on to analyzing a discovery dispute in a criminal case, and complete the day by preparing for oral argument in an administrative matter. Judge Abbott provided mentorship to attorneys at the Office of the Montana State Auditor, helping them to understand how to effectively prosecute criminal cases while ensuring the defendant's rights were properly protected. Judge Abbott's substantial background prepares him well for the heavy and diverse district court caseload.

Judge Abbott has excellent judicial temperament. He is an honest family man who lives and works with integrity. Abbott has a well-earned reputation for being fair and treating others with respect. Combined with an exceptional work ethic, these characteristics will serve our community well in this position.

I encourage you to confirm Judge Abbott's appointment. He has earned our trust and he will serve us well.

Thank you for your consideration,



Michelle R. Dietrich

February 28, 2021

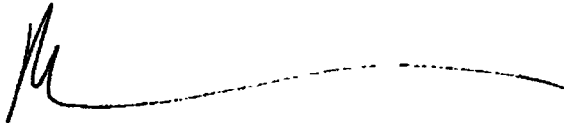
**State Capitol
Senate Judiciary Committee
Attn. Keith Regier
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706**

Dear Senator Regier,

I am writing in support of the confirmation of Judge Chris Abbott. I have known Judge Abbott most of my legal career. I often had the pleasure of working opposite of Judge Abbott when he was a public defender. His high intelligence, strong work ethic, and fairness were without fail. I looked forward to seeing his name on pleadings because I knew the outcome of the case would be better for having him involved.

Judge Abbott's skill and reputation as a lawyer are outstanding in this community. I am confident he will serve Lewis and Clark County and the State of Montana well on the bench. I respectfully urge Judge Abbott's confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ole Olson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

**Ole Olson
1929 Virginia Dale
Helena, MT 59601**