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March 18, 2019

Wisconsin State Supreme Court
c/o Clerk of Supreme Court
Attention: Deputy Clerk-Rules
P.O. Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

Re: Rule Petition 19-01

In re Petition for the Amendments Relating to Court Reporters and Making the Record (as amended on February 22, 2019)

To the Honorable Justices of the State Supreme Court:

I am writing in support of Petition 19-01, as amended, relating to amendments to the Statutes and Supreme Court Rules regarding court reporters. First, while it goes without saying that the first preference is a live stenographic reporter, I am in favor of moving towards the use of a blended system of stenographic and digital audio reporting due to the decreasing number of court reporters and the fact that digital audio reporting methods have improved, and/or are better than no record. When I practiced bankruptcy law in the federal courts, many of those courts used only digital audio reporting. With one exception, there were no errors or concerns with that manner of reporting. And, that exception was years ago—and systems have improved since that time.

The more populated areas of the State may soon face the same declines in stenographers that are currently facing the less-populated areas. The lack of court reporters in those rural areas, alone, is a sufficient basis upon which to make these changes. However, it is also a wake-up call that the problem will soon be a state-wide concern. The time to address this matter is now.

Second, I believe that the proposed rule changes appropriately address the transition to the blended system. As well, they further maintain judges' ability to appoint and employ a court reporter, while still providing the Director of State Court, Chief Judges and/or District Court Administrator's the flexibility to assign court

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reporters in needed areas including “inter-district” areas (and not just those within a judicial district). (See the Minor Amendment of Petition 19-01, filed on February 22, 2019, by the Director of State Courts). This will be another means to insure appropriate and best coverage in the future as the number of stenographers, sadly, continues to decline.

Accordingly, I am in support of Petition 19-01, as amended, and urge its adoption by the State Supreme Court.

Sincerely,

/s/ Maria S. Lazar

Maria S. Lazar
Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge
Branch 7

c: Randy R. Koschnick, Director of State Courts (by email)