

# The Catalyst

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Standing Committee on Women and the Law

## Growing Your Practice by Networking

BY PALOMA HOLLOMAN

When I started my law practice, I quickly realized that starting a business from the ground up required something very important, brand awareness. In 2020, the ARDC reported that there were 94,907 registered lawyers in Illinois.<sup>1</sup> The first question I had to ask myself was, "With all the lawyers out there, how is anyone going to know my firm even exists?" Whether

you are starting a practice or are trying to expand your current book of clients, building your network is a great way to promote growth in your business.

### Networking with Lawyers Versus Non-Lawyers

There's a big difference between

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## A Revitalized Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes

BY CINDY BUYS

The United States has seen a substantial increase in the number of hate crimes reported in recent years, with more hate crimes reported in 2020 than in any other year since 2008.<sup>2</sup> According to data collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the majority of hate crime victims are targeted because of the offender's bias against race or ethnicity.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there has been an particularly

alarming increase in anti-Asian hate crime that has occurred since the pandemic began in March 2020. The non-profit, Stop AAPI Hate, has received more than 9,000 anti-Asian incident reports between March 2020 and June 2021.<sup>4</sup> Specific instances of these hate crimes include a fatal assault on an 84-year-old retired man from Thailand living in San Francisco<sup>5</sup> and an

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## Growing Your Practice by Networking

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networking with lawyers and non-lawyers. By networking with other lawyers, I've made great friends and mentors. When you attend an attorney networking event, you already know that you have something in common: You're lawyers and you have most likely been looking forward to the networking event to unwind from your busy week.

While I've made friends with non-lawyers through networking, I've learned to have different expectations of networking events with non-lawyers. At these events, I've met great people who have contributed to the growth of my network, but I've also met people who are handing out brochures or trying to sell you something on the spot. There's also the issue of non-lawyers having their own perceptions of lawyers in general, we've all heard the "lawyer jokes" at least once.

So how do we make networking conducive for our practices? The answer is different for everyone, but the following tips have worked for me:

### Identify your power partners.

What's a power partner? It's someone who will often serve the needs of your clients and their work compliments yours. For an estate planning attorney, examples of ideal power partners are financial advisors, accountants, valuation experts, and trust officers. When I am out networking, I want to connect with people of all professions and backgrounds, but it is also very important that I can connect with power partners who may be able to help my clients or who may have clients who need my assistance.

### Describe what you do in one sentence.

You know that 30-second elevator pitch? Oftentimes, people exceed it, but if you go beyond 30 seconds, people stop listening and often forget what you do. If you have to describe what you do in more than a sentence or two, then people who are not lawyers may not understand what you do and won't be able to refer others to you. We all have different practice areas. If you

primarily take criminal defense cases and occasionally have real estate cases, then you won't go in-depth about your real estate cases during your elevator pitch. If you did talk about these cases, you run the risk of the person you're talking to not remembering that you practice criminal law when that's your bread and butter. There will be time at a later point for you to talk more about the additional work you do.

Be yourself.

Have you ever met someone who acts genuinely interested in you and what you do and then says, "nice to meet you" every time they see you? It makes you wonder how genuine they were in the first place. I've had the best interactions with people who share more than their professional identify with me. We all have families and hobbies and aren't just our professions. When you're networking, you aren't selling your practice, you're essentially selling yourself. Summarizing your resume won't let people see who you are, they can access LinkedIn for that information. By being authentically you, you are giving people an opportunity to actually see who is the behind the operation of your business.

### Follow up.

While I previously mentioned "brand awareness," networking is not giving out or collecting as many business cards as you can. Following up after networking is key to forming meaningful relationships. By getting out there, you've made people aware that you are an attorney, practicing in a particular area of the law, but what else will they form their opinion on besides this first impression? Having phone calls, grabbing lunch, or even writing a personal note can help strengthen your connection with the new member of your network.

### Conclusion

Sometimes it's uncomfortable not knowing a single person in a large room, but all it takes is making a great connection with one person who knows or works with people who need your services. You will not have only gained a new friend, but you

## The Catalyst

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will also have someone who is contributing to your growth through referrals. Getting clients from networking doesn't happen overnight. You should build rapport with the people you're networking with. Once someone encounters a pressing legal issue, they'll be more likely to remember that

you—a person in a large community of lawyers—are equipped to help them resolve their issue. ■

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## **A Revitalized Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes**

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Asian-American family being assaulted in Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup>

While hate crimes perpetrated against Asian Americans have been at the front and center of recent news coverage, other groups are being targeted as well. FBI statistics regarding hate crimes in 2020 show that approximately 13.4 percent of individuals were targeted because of bias against religion and 20.5 percent because of their sexual orientation.<sup>7</sup> This trend has continued in 2021, as shown by a Tennessee man who admitted to attacking a Muslim family because of their religion<sup>8</sup> and a Louisiana State University student being assaulted and left in a coma because of his sexual orientation.<sup>9</sup> Attacks based on gender also remain a concern as shown by the case of an Ohio man who identified as “incel” or “involuntarily celibate” and who planned a mass shooting of sorority students at an Ohio university because he believes he was unjustly denied sexual or romantic attention.<sup>10</sup>

### **What Is a Hate Crime?**

Statutory definitions of hate crimes vary by jurisdiction. To commit a hate crime in Illinois, the perpetrator must be motivated to act by one of the personal characteristics listed in the Illinois hate crimes statute and must commit one of the specific crimes enumerated in the statute. Illinois law defines a “hate crime” as follows:

A person commits hate crime when, by reason of the actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or national origin of another individual or group of individuals, regardless of the existence of any other motivating factor

or factors, he or she commits assault, battery, aggravated assault, intimidation, stalking, cyberstalking, misdemeanor theft, criminal trespass to residence, misdemeanor criminal damage to property, criminal trespass to vehicle, criminal trespass to real property, mob action, disorderly conduct, transmission of obscene messages, harassment by telephone, or harassment through electronic communications as these crimes are defined in . . . this Code.<sup>11</sup>

The Illinois Hate Crimes statute does not create new crimes, but rather takes the approach of enhancing sentencing if particular crimes are motivated by bias against a protected person or group. Hate crimes are most often committed against persons<sup>12</sup> but may also be committed against property.<sup>13</sup> According to FBI data from 2019, the most common hate crime is intimidation (40 percent) followed by simple assault (36.7 percent).<sup>14</sup>

Underreporting of hate crimes remains a serious problem. Of the 15,588 law enforcement agencies participating in the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program in 2019, 86.1 percent reported no hate crimes in their jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> In Illinois, 700 out of 935 law enforcement agencies reported hate crime data to the federal government, but most of them did not report any hate crime activity in their jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup> In 2020, law enforcement agencies documented 56 hate crimes in Illinois, with the largest number (25) falling in the category of “anti-black or anti-African American.”<sup>17</sup> Consistent with federal data, intimidation and assault were the two most frequent types of hate crimes in Illinois in 2020.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Commission and Its Work**

Partly in response to this rise in hate crimes, Governor Pritzker has revitalized the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes (Commission).<sup>19</sup> The Commission originally was established in 2007 by Governor Blagojevich. Its purposes include:

(1) To identify and uproot sources of discrimination and bias at the source; (2) To assist with the development of resources, training, and information that allow for a swift and efficient response to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; (3) To work with educators throughout Illinois on issues concerning discrimination and hate, teaching acceptance, and embracing diversity at academic institutions; (4) To help ensure that this State's laws addressing discrimination and hate-related violence are widely known and applied correctly to help eradicate and prevent crimes based on discrimination and intolerance; (5) To make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly for statutory and programmatic changes necessary to eliminate discrimination and hate-based violence; (6) To help implement recommendations by working with State agencies, the General Assembly, the business community, social service community and other organizations.<sup>20</sup>

The Commission consists of 21 members, including its chair, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by Senate. The current chair is Jim Bennett, director of the Illinois Department of Human Rights. As of this writing, there are 18 active commissioners, the majority of whom are from Cook County, with four members residing elsewhere around the state.<sup>21</sup>

The Commission has organized its work

into three subcommittees. The first seeks to identify the root causes of discrimination and hate crimes and appropriate responses.<sup>22</sup> A second is examining the legal and regulatory environment to ensure that Illinois law reflects best practices with respect to charging and prosecuting hate crimes.<sup>23</sup> The third seeks to identify or create better education and training programs and engage in outreach to affected persons and communities.<sup>24</sup> The Commission is directed by statute to provide an annual report on its work and recommendations to the Governor by March 30 each year.

The full Commission meets every other month, while the three subcommittees meet monthly. Meetings are open to public and interested persons are encouraged to be engaged in the Commission's work. The Commission also is hosting Town Hall meetings to hear from the public. Information about meetings and Town Hall events may be found on the Commission's website.<sup>25</sup> The Commission invites everyone to be part of this vital work. ■

*Cindy G. Buys is a professor of law at Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Law, a Commissioner on the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes, and a member of the Illinois State Bar Association. Thank you to my SIU Law research assistants, Jacob McGowan and Reyna Herrera, for their assistance with the research for this article.*

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## Perspective: Asylum Law

BY COLLEEN KILBRIDE

"no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark"

*Home* by Warsan Shire<sup>1</sup>

I represent asylum seekers who were forced to flee their home country because as the poet Warsan Shire aptly writes, "home is the mouth of a shark." She goes onto to say, "you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land." These individuals made the excruciatingly difficult decision in an effort to keep their families alive. Traumatized and hopeful, they arrive seeking protection known as asylum.

Under U.S. law, a non-citizen qualifies for asylum if they meet the definition of a refugee. Congress has defined "refugee" as a person unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a "well-founded fear of persecution" due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.<sup>2</sup>

As a nation of laws, it is imperative that the right to seek asylum at our border actually exists. Unfortunately, for those lucky enough to survive the dangerous journey to the U.S. border, many quickly realize how difficult it is to request protection. The

Trump administration largely prohibited anyone from requesting asylum through various anti-immigrant policies. Despite a change in Administrations, the Trump era policies are still in effect making it near impossible to request asylum. Individuals seeking protection at our border have suffered uniquely inhumane horrors and are routinely denied the dignity they deserve. Asylum seekers are by legal definition a vulnerable population deserving of humanitarian protection.

## Get Involved

You don't have to dedicate your entire career to make a life-changing impact for an immigrant child or family. The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)<sup>3</sup> is the largest immigrant legal services provider in the Midwest and serves clients throughout Illinois. NIJC offers opportunities to provide pro bono representation for the various immigrant populations such as:

- Children (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status & state predicate orders)
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Asylum for children, families and LBGTQ migrants
- Survivors of violent crimes and

domestic violence (U Visa & VAWA)

- Citizenship

**Family law attorneys are especially helpful!** NIJC's SIJS Predicate Order Pro Bono program connects volunteer attorneys to parents or guardians of immigrant children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected, to help them obtain the state court orders necessary to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). More information about NIJC's program and the support offered to pro bono attorneys is available at <https://immigrantjustice.org/for-attorneys>. ■

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*Colleen Kilbride is a senior attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center where she represents asylum-seeking families. Colleen is CLE co-chair of ISBA's Women and the Law Committee, co-chair of the Immigration Committee for the Women's Bar Association of Illinois and vice-chair of the Social Security Administration Liaison Committee for American Immigration Lawyers Association.*

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3. Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) is dedicated to ensuring human rights protections and access to justice for all immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. With offices in Chicago, Indiana, San Diego, and Washington, D.C., NIJC provides direct legal services to and advocates for these populations through policy reform, impact litigation, and public education. Since its founding three decades ago, NIJC has been unique in blending individual client advocacy with broad-based systemic change. <https://immigrantjustice.org/about-nijc>.

# Promoting Change in the Judiciary: A Candid Discussion with Kane County Circuit Judge Bianca Camargo

BY GLADYS PROA SANTANA



This past summer, the Illinois Supreme Court took affirmative steps in its mission to foster diverse, equitable, and inclusive leadership within the Illinois bar and judiciary. For the first time in Kane County's history, the Illinois Supreme Court unanimously appointed Bianca Camargo, the first Mexican American woman to fill a circuit judge vacancy. I had the tremendous honor of interviewing Circuit Judge Bianca

Camargo to discuss her appointment to the bench and was inspired not only by her story about family, struggles, and accomplishments, but also by her steadfast commitment to the community she serves and the passion and humility she brings to the bench.

Judge Camargo is the daughter of Mexican immigrants, who like so many others, came to this country determined to forge a better life for themselves and their children. Although her parents did not possess college degrees, they possessed an insatiable and unwavering belief that hard work and determination would open doors for themselves and present opportunities for their children that they never even dreamed of having. Growing up, Judge Camargo shared that she recalls her father hurrying home after a long day's work at the factory only to exchange his lunch bag for a bookbag and race off to night school where he studied

meticulously in pursuit of a highly sought out union apprenticeship program. Judge Camargo's mother was similarly determined to provide for her family. She worked two jobs up to two years prior to her passing to supplement the family's income to help pay for things such as the mortgage or Judge Camargo's soccer gear at West Aurora High School.

As Judge Camargo reflected on her childhood, she shared that she witnessed firsthand the value of her parents' ambition and acknowledged that many of the opportunities she was afforded were a result of their sacrifice. Their commitment to realizing their dream of a better life had a profound impact on her outlook in life. It has served as an endless source of motivation and gratitude and helped instill the skills she needed to persevere. As an example, Judge Camargo shared that those skills came in handy when it came time to apply for college

and law school. She admitted that being a first-generation college and law student was difficult for her. It meant not knowing the ropes of navigating the institution of higher education. It meant having to independently decipher the application process, educating herself on financial aid, and learning about scholarships. Nevertheless, grounded in the firm belief that hard work and dedication can overcome hardship, she successfully earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Northern Illinois University, went on to earn a juris doctorate from Northern Illinois University College of Law in 2010 and is now a sitting circuit judge.

Judge Camargo modestly laughed at my enthusiasm for her accomplishment and reiterated how incredibly blessed and humbled she felt in her position as circuit judge. She insists that she would not have weathered the nerve-wracking application process to become a circuit judge without the support of her family, her husband, and her son. Just as her parents did for her, Judge Camargo strives to instill in her son that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and stay committed. Her appointment is indeed an accomplishment that I'm sure her son will come to appreciate as he grows older. Judge Camargo candidly shared, "I almost fell out of my seat when I learned that the Illinois Supreme Court had unanimously selected me among the other applicants to be Kane County's next circuit judge."

However, for those who know Judge Camargo, ascension to the bench seems like the most natural and logical progression in her career and continued service to her community. Her career, like her personal values, have always been centered around helping members of her community long before ever taking her seat on the bench. Before going to law school, she served as a victim advocate at the Kane County State's Attorney's Office. In this role, she helped victims of violent crimes navigate the criminal justice system by explaining the court process to them. After graduating from law school, she was eager to return to the Kane County State's Attorney's Office but this time instead of just explaining the legal process, she wanted to play an active role in it. She sought out and secured a position

as an Assistant State's Attorney, prosecuting cases on behalf of the victims of violent crimes and the citizens of Kane County. In that position, she brought over 100 cases to verdict which included victim sensitive cases involving domestic battery, sexual assault, and crimes against children.

Judge Camargo unequivocally stated that doing her part to help make her community a safer place as a Kane County prosecutor was truly the most fulfilling position she has ever served. Now, in her role as a circuit judge, she reiterates that the bench is a natural extension of her desire to help the members of her community. She appreciates that she is in a unique position to help restore faith in the justice system and to help promote access to justice. She thoughtfully and humbly weighed in on the enormous responsibility she feels toward the community she serves as the first Latina appointed as a circuit judge but felt confident that her background made her uniquely positioned to offer a diverse perspective on the bench.

Recognizing that her experiences and her path to a judgeship are unique and diverse from that of her predecessors, she went on to explain, "The bench in a county should always represent the community it serves. It is important for our communities to see faces like theirs staring back at them when they enter a courtroom." She acknowledged and accepted that the excitement over her appointment as the first Latina circuit judge is not about her. Instead, she suggested that the importance of her historic appointment stands for the notion that we are moving one step closer toward promoting equality and diversity within the legal community. It stands as a symbol of empowerment to women who struggle to find a seat at the table. It stands for the statement that diversity matters in the legal field where there are few attorneys of color and even fewer judges of color. Indeed, her appointment resonates with hope and optimism not only for the Kane County community she currently serves but for the entire legal community as whole, as we make strides to promote diversity and equality within the legal field and beyond. ■



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*injuries and automobile accidents, and from defective products. She can be reached at 630-232-6333 or [gps@meyers-flowers.com](mailto:gps@meyers-flowers.com).*

# Judicial/Legal Outreach

BY JUDGE ANN BREEN-GRECO

For many years I have participated in outreach programs with students both in Chicago and around the country. I find this to be one of the most gratifying aspects of our profession. Young people love to talk with lawyers and judges and find out how they decided to be part of the legal profession and how to get there. Mayor Lori Lightfoot has a program every year called One Summer Chicago. It provides jobs for young people in the city. There are literally dozens of not-for-profit organizations involved in the program. This year I arranged for the American Bar Association Judicial Division Standing Committee on Diversity on the Bench to talk with students involved in this program. There were at least 200 students and about two dozen judges (in different Zoom rooms) who both gave presentations on the Rule of Law and invited questions

from the attendees. The second program I helped organize was with Polished Pebbles, a not for profit that mentors young girls on the west and south sides of Chicago. For this program, I involved the National Association of Women Judges District 8 of which I am the director. These young women were involved in summer school activities that would provide them with the opportunity to talk with representatives of corporations and other opportunities to discuss career paths. We had at least 20 young women in the session and several Judges. The third program also involved Polished Pebbles, but this time working with the American Bar Association Judicial Division Outreach Program. The unofficial theme of the session was: "If you see it, you can be it." The participating JD mentors were: Judges Nannette Baker, Cynthia



Fordham, Shelbonni Coleman Hall, Patricia Miles, Marshall Jackson Hatcher, and Miriam Perry. The participants were part of a Chicago Public Schools After School Matters cohort. The judges described their background and where they were sitting on the bench and their work. The students then asked a number of questions. All of these programs were well attended by young people who were very interested in this kind of communication. This kind of program is a wonderful opportunity for the Women in Law Committee to encourage young people to join the legal profession. ■



## Member Spotlight: Missy Greathouse

BY ERIN M. WILSON

I interviewed new member, Missy Greathouse, so we can all get to know her better. I hope you enjoy learning about Missy and welcoming her to our committee.

### **Tell us about yourself personally.**

I grew up in St. Louis, MO and Glen Carbon, IL. I have a bachelor of science in social work from Saint Louis University and served as a foster care case manager and specialized foster home licensing worker for

St. Louis City Children's Division for several years before attending law school. I received my J.D. from Southern Illinois University School of Law. Outside of my education/work, I have always been interested in being of service to my communities. I was a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for six years for Williamson County CASA and currently serve as the vice-chair of Illinois CASA. I have also served in many leadership

roles in ISBA throughout the years. My most important volunteer role at this time is as the treasurer of my daughter's girl scout troop, Girl Scout Troop #756. I currently live in Glen Carbon, IL with my husband, Lee, and our six-year-old daughter, Grace. We have a very busy life between swim practice, dance classes, girl scouts, and all the other fun activities we have the privilege of driving Grace to and from at this time. Some

random facts about me include: my husband and I won a wedding, I'm a 200-hr registered yoga teacher, cows are my favorite animal, and I love Dave Matthews Band.

**Tell us about your work as an attorney.**

In my class, I was one of the few people who went to law school without a goal of practicing law, and I have only taken pro bono cases from Land of Lincoln. Instead, I have spent my entire career in the alternative dispute resolution field and in nonprofit administration. Currently, I serve as the executive director of Dispute Resolution Institute, Inc. (DRI). DRI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with offices located in Carbondale, Belleville, and Champaign, IL. The mission of DRI is to help people in conflict find common ground, resolve disputes, and reach agreement. DRI envisions a world where mediation and other forms of dispute resolution are the first choice for people in conflict. To live out our mission, we currently administer several community- and court-based mediation programs throughout Illinois. These programs provide free mediation services to people in dispute in many areas including eviction, foreclosure, family, small claims, community, and agricultural disputes. Additionally, we provide basic, family, and advanced mediation skills training to new and skilled mediators. Outside of my work at DRI, I serve as an adjunct clinical assistant professor at Southern Illinois University School of Law where I teach Mediation Skills and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

**What made you interested in joining Women and the Law? What other involvement do you have in the ISBA?**

I was interested in joining Women and the Law because I know so many wonderful women leaders who speak highly of the group and its work. This is my first year on Women and the Law, and already feel so welcomed and supported by the membership. I have been involved in ISBA in several ways throughout the years. Currently, I serve as the chair of the Child Law Section Council, as the ex-officio chair and CLE coordinator of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council, as a member of the Special Committee on Racial Inequality, as a member of the Bar Elections Supervision Committee, and as an assembly member in

the Third Judicial Circuit. I have previously served on the Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services and the Agricultural Section Council.

**What specific legal or non-legal issues that affect women are you interested in addressing?**

As this is a personal issue that I grapple with myself daily, the whole idea surrounding work-life balance is the most interesting issue affecting women to me at this time. The weight on women's shoulders to be all-the-things to everyone is just not realistic. Additionally, as a newly-late-in-life diagnosed woman with ADHD, supporting the neurodivergent women in our community is very important to me.

**Have you read any good books or watched any good shows recently?**

I love everything about Schitt's Creek. The show created a perfect community of people who learn and love and grow together, all while accepting each other's differences. If the world could be more like Schitt's Creek, the world would be an even more amazing place.

**Who do you look up to?**

I look up to my mom, Becky Curran, and my gram, Martha Prough. My mom is a single mother and always worked hard to ensure I was well cared for. I have also lived with my gram since I was born, and she is like a second mother to me. Since my grandpa passed away when I was 11, I grew up in a home where women did the work, from outside the home jobs to fixing toilets. I was raised to know I did not need a partner to complete me and was capable of anything I put my mind to, and I am very thankful to them both for instilling that in me all while opening their home to foster children for over twenty years.

**How do you believe it best to pay it forward?**

I believe people should pay it forward in whatever way works for their current situation. Whether through donating money, time, or skills, anything we can do to support others is a wonderful way to ensure we are paying it forward. Personally, I love mentoring new mediators and students.

**What have you learned or changed about your life as a result of the pandemic, either personally or professional (or both)?**

I have learned that I love hugs a lot more than I realized. I have missed being physically with people a lot more than I really anticipated, however, I have also learned that I work best day-to-day in a space alone. I have also learned how resilient children are as I have watched my daughter go through Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade all while wearing a mask, and all without complaint because she knew she was keeping her friends and family safe. ■

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*Erin M. Wilson of The Law Office of Erin M. Wilson LLC, offering family law services in Cook County in litigation | mediation | parenting coordination | child representative & guardian ad litem.*