IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

OLENA KARPENKO,

Petitioner,

VS.

THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, IN AND FOR TH COUNTY OF CLARK, AND THE HONORABLE DAWN THRONE, DISTRICT COURT JUDGE, Respondents, and

ENRIQUE SCHAERER; and DOES I through X,

Real Party in Interest.

Electronically Filed Mar 17 2022 12:04 p.m. Elizabeth A. Browr 830 ferk of Supreme Court

Case No.

District Court Case No: D-21-628088-D

REAL PARTY IN INTEREST'S ANSWER

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NRAP 26.1 DISCLOSURE

The undersigned counsel of record certifies that the following are persons and entities as described in NRAP 26.1(a), and must be disclosed. These representations are made in order that the justices of this court may evaluate possible disqualification or recusal.

- All parent corporations and publicly-held companies owning 10 percent or more of the party's stock: None.
- 2. Names of all law firms whose attorneys have appeared for the party or amicus in this case (including proceedings in the district court or before an administrative agency) or are expected to appear in this court:

Kainen Law Group, PLLC Pecos Law Group

3. If litigant is using a pseudonym, the litigant's true name: None.

Dated this ____ day of March, 2022

By:

RACHEAL H. MASTEL, ESQ. 3303 Novat Street, Suite 200 Las Vegas, Nevada 89129 702-823-4900

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STATEMENT OF THE CASE

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The parties were married in Las Vegas, Nevada, in December 2020. OK000002. Five months later, on May 28, 2021, Enrique filed his Complaint for Divorce. OK000001. At the time, Olena was pregnant, but had not given birth. OK000002. Enrique's Complaint alleged that he was not the father of the minor child. OK000002. On August 5, 2021, Enrique filed a Motion to address the financial aspects of the divorce in accordance with the Premarital Agreement, and to have genetic testing done for the purposes of determining paternity. OK000036. Olena opposed the same and requested that the genetic testing be done in Ukraine, where she had relocated while pregnant. OK000065. The district court issued an Order on September 23, 2021, finding that there were "potential vulnerabilities in accurate and credible DNA collection and paternity testing exist[ing] in Ukraine," and ordered that the specimen collection and testing for paternity be done in the United States. OK000075 - 000083. The Order also required Enrique to pay for Olena's travel. OK000080 - 000081. An Interlocutory Decree, resolving all financial issues between the parties (except for the potential for child support), was entered on September 30, 2021. OK000098 - 000104. On October 4, 2021, Olena filed a Motion to Reconsider,

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to suspend discovery into her medical records and to have the DNA testing be done in Ukraine. OK000117 - 000124. A second Motion, to set aside the Interlocutory Decree, was filed October 7, 2021. OK000136. Olena also filed, Ex Parte, a third Motion to have the Ukraine Consulate Observe the Hearing. OK000148. Enrique opposed the two Motions to set aside. OK000183. Enrique also opposed the Motion to have the Ukraine Consulate participate. OK000171. The district court held a hearing on November 10, 2021, and denied the Motions for participation of the Consulate and to set aside the Interlocutory Decree, and deferred the Motion to reconsider where the DNA testing should be done. - 000285. Enrique filed a Motion for Summary Judgment on Paternity on November 24, 2021. OK000260. The hearing on the Motion for Summary Judgment and the reconsideration of the location of the DNA testing was held on February 22, 2022.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Enrique and Olena were married in December 2020, approximately one month after Olena told Enrique she was pregnant. OK0000040. Outside of that one fact, however, Olena's factual representations are inaccurate. In February, 2021, Enrique bought a new house in which to live with Olena and the

coming baby, to fit Olena's specifications. **ES0105**; **ES0131-0134**. The parties clearly still loved with each other. **ES0086-0158**. Enrique tried to be helpful in Olena's green card process; however, when he was given the affidavit of support, stating that he would ensure that Olena was supported indefinitely, he stated he was uncomfortable signing such an open-ended contract. **ES0107**; **0094-0103**. Olena was aware, and, Enrique, Olena, and her immigration division manager discussed other options for Olena to seek her green card on her merit, rather than their marriage. **ES0107**; **0094-0103**.

With respect to the Premarital Agreement, Olena cannot claim duress in this Writ. She did not challenge the validity of the Prenuptial Agreement in the district court, in fact she affirmatively agreed the same was valid and stipulated to a financial division based on the same. **OK0000016**; **0000026**. Olena was represented by her own independent counsel throughout the entirety of the litigation, and when she executed the Premarital Agreement.

Olena left for Ukraine on good terms with Enrique. They spoke regularly after, and he was clearly supportive of her and the baby the entire time. **ES0114-0124**; **0142-0156**. When it became apparent that Olena was not returning, and Enrique believed she was not working on trying to come back to their marriage,

and that she had lied to him about the paternity of the minor child, he finally gave up and filed his Complaint for Divorce.

It should be noted, Enrique is *not* listed as the father on either the minor child's birth certificate, or even on the medical forms Olena filled out in Nevada while still married to him, and living in the United States. ES0090-0092; 0109. Without getting into all of the details of the pleadings and facts, which are not necessary to the argument itself, Enrique would note that Olena has misrepresented the allegations, particularly as to what he argued and alleged regarding her relocating to Ukraine and her green card application. Notably, Enrique never said that Olena left in secret, merely that she made her plan to leave *and* flight arrangements without his knowledge (including buying the tickets themselves). OK0000040; 000187.

Enrique made arguments and provided offers of proof to support his positions as to the need for DNA testing to be completed in the United States.

OK0000044- 0000046. The district court reviewed the same, as well as the

Another man is listed on the birth certificate. Further, while Enrique is listed as the "emergency contact" on the forms in Nevada, Olena did not list him or anyone else as the father on those forms.

counter arguments by Olena, and made its ruling. **OK0000077**; **0000079**-**0000081**. The same is true with respect to his request for the HIPAA release, on which the district court also ruled. **OK0000081**-**0000082**. Enrique wanted to know if Olena had ever disclosed to her doctors that someone else was the father, or alternatively - if she had actually even listed him as the father. **OK000203**. Given that Enrique did receive documents in discovery that show she <u>did not</u> list him as the father and listed someone else as the father, the district court's finding that the information was relevant is understandable, as was Enrique's request for the same.

Olena, upon retaining Marshal Willick to replace her prior counsel, filed to have the Order on DNA testing and the HIPAA release reconsidered. OK000117. The Motion set forth Olena's proposal for testing, based on protocols represented by Mr. Willick as being "standard." OK000120-000121. Enrique pointed out in his Opposition that Olena's Motion was simply rehashing the arguments that her prior counsel had previously made. OK000189-000190; 000195. Enrique also reiterated his concerns as to the reliability of DNA sampling and testing in Ukraine. OK000192-000194. Enrique also provided

offers of proof as to how Olena could legally travel to the U.S. for testing. OK000198-000199.

Olena also requested that the district court allow the Ukraine Cosulate to observe the upcoming hearing. **OK000148**. Enrique relied on NRS 126.211 in objecting to Olena's request for the Consul to attend the hearing. **OK000172**. In her reply, Olena ignores NRS 126.211 entirely, addressing NRS 125.110 and 125.080, as well as the *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and Optional Protocol on Disputes* ("Vienna Convention") to justify the request for the appearance by the Consul. **OK000223 - 000226**.

A hearing was held on November 10, 2021, at which time the district court denied the request for the Ukraine Consulate to be present for the hearing and deferred the Motion to reconsider the testing, for the parties to be able to provide "persuasive testing and collection protocol in a neutral third-party country."

OK000284. The Order also affirmed the prior Order regarding the HIPAA release. OK000284.

On November 24, 2021, Enrique filed a Motion for Summary Judgment.

OK000260. The basis for the same was Olena's failure to respond to the Request

The district court did not err in denying Olena's request for the There has been no judicial bias and there is no basis to reassign this Page 7 of 21

does not have a plain, speedy and adequate remedy in the ordinary course of law. The issuance of a writ of mandamus or prohibition is purely discretionary with this court." *In re Matter of William J. Raggio Family Trust*, 136 Nev. 172, 175, 460 P.3d 969, 972 (2020), internal citations omitted. Enrique agrees that the decisions in this case, as to how to complete the DNA testing and whether to allow the Consul to attend hearings would be made moot prior by the entry of a Final Order, and any potential resulting harm would have already occurred by that point. That said, Enrique believes that the district court's Orders were within its discretion.

"In the context of writ petitions, this court reviews district court orders for an arbitrary or capricious abuse of discretion. However we review questions of law de novo, even in the context of writ petitions." *City of Henderson v. 8th Judicial Dist. Ct.*, 137 Nev. Ad. Op. 26, 489 P.3d 908, 910 (2021), internal citations omitted.

Although reliable DNA sampling and testing should be done immediately, that argument is not proper as a basis for this *Writ*. The district court has already Ordered that the testing is to be done as soon as possible. Very unfortunately, it appears that Olena cannot get the testing done in the Ukraine at present, in light

of the ongoing Russian invasion. In fact, at this point, it appears the only way for the testing to be done immediately would be for Olena to leave the Ukraine.

Further, the claimed standard of practice "recommended" in the abstract by a third-party organization is not binding on the district court. Nor is the district court required to allow the DNA testing to be done in Ukraine. The district court made the necessary findings of fact to make its Orders that the testing is to be done in the United States, and there is no reason for this Court to interfere with that Order. Where the testing is done is at the discretion of the district court, the court did not abuse its discretion in Ordering the same to take place in the United States.

There is no basis for *Writ* relief as to the presumption of paternity as there is an adequate and speedy remedy at law, to wit: the ability to file an appeal upon conclusion of the case. *Writ* relieve is unnecessary.

Finally, there is no requirement that the Ukraine Consulate be involved. Paternity cases are sensitive cases and sealed. Third party involvement is not typical and it is not required by U.S. law. Article 5 of the Vienna Convention does not *require* the district court to allow the Consul to participate and the district court did not abuse its discretion in denying that request.

Nothing in the decisions of the district court evinces a bias against Ukraine or Ukrainians. Frankly, nothing in the litigation supports Olena's narrative about Enrique and his allegations either. The reality is that Olena simply does not like the outcome in the district court and has new counsel who are willing and able to try a new and different tactic to get her the result she wants.

ARGUMENT

I. The Orders Related to the DNA Testing Protocol and Time-line Are Proper

Neither the district court, nor Enrique, object to reliable DNA testing being done as quickly as possible. In fact, Enrique would prefer the testing be done sooner rather than later. *However*, the purpose of a *Writ*, is to "compel the performance of an act that the law requires as a duty resulting from an office, trust or station, or to control an arbitrary or capricious exercise of discretion." *Segovia v. 8th Judicial Dist. Ct.*, 133 Nev. 910, 912, 407 P.3d 783, 785 (2017). Alternatively, "a writ of prohibition is appropriate when a district court acts without or in excess of its jurisdiction." *Id.*, at 911-912.

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The district court has not *prevented*, or in fact made any orders to delay, the DNA testing. The "delay" which exists has resulted from ancillary concernstowit: Olena's apparent unwillingness or purported inability to enter the United States. Incidently, in response to those concerns, the district court actually ordered the parties to attempt to find a solution that could include a neutral third-party country, which may have allowed for easier travel for Olena. **OK000283-000284.** There is no basis for *Writ* relief on this issue. Any and all delays in DNA testing are the result of Olena's or her counsel's actions, not the district court's decisions or discretion.

Olena has alleged that she cannot legally enter the United States at this time. She provided an email which she claimed supported her allegation. In response, Enrique provided evidence of a viable alternative path for her to enter the United States. The appellate courts, "leave witness credibility determinations to the district court," including the resolution of conflicting evidence. *Ellis v. Carucci*, 123 Nev. 145, 152, 161 P.3d 239, 244 (2007). Therefore, whether Olena had a reasonable path to returning expeditiously to the United States for testing was a determination for the trial court to make. While the district court did not make a specific finding on that fact, given that the topic was clearly discussed

and argued before the district court, the court's finding and Order that testing should occur in the United States, reasonably implies that the district court determined Olena had a path to return to the U.S. for the DNA testing. *See Luciano v. Diercks*, 97 Nev. 637, 639-640, 637 P.2d 1219, 1220 (1981). Given the conflicting evidence, there is no basis for this Court to find that the district court's Order is impossible to achieve.

Further, NRS 126.121(1) requires the district court to Order DNA testing whenever requested by a party in a Paternity action. *However*, the statute leaves to the discretion of the district court the "restrictions and directions" which the district court "deems proper" for the testing itself. The district court heard argument and offers of proof as to how to perform the testing and issued its ruling. Doing so was well within its discretion, and given that conflicting evidence was offered, this Court should not overrule that decision.

While the district court had the discretion to evaluate the proposal set forth by Olena as being a claimed "standard of practice," for international family law cases, the district court is not required to adopt that standard especially when the same is in dispute as being reasonable under the circumstances. The district court had the opportunity to consider the option and specifically chose not to adopt it.

Absent an Order from this Court that the standard should be adopted across the state, the district court is not bound by any recommendation. In addition, given the discretion given to the district court by the legislature in NRS 126.121(1), any adoption of such a standard as a rule would improperly infringe upon that discretion.

It should be noted, that Enrique never threatened to withhold support, but paying the same is predicated on being the father. In fact, NRS 126.143 only requires setting support after a trial on paternity is set. The district court has not set a trial; but it has indicated that it may set that trial (and simply proceed without the DNA evidence) in the near future. That said, the statutes also encourage the district court to resolve the matter without a formal trial. NRS 126.111. The parties have testified via their affidavits, and provided offers of proof. The district court is permitted to proceed without a DNA test (NRS 126.121(2)), and make findings based on the facts before it. In light of the same, it would be inequitable to require Enrique to pay child support at this time. Further, the payment of support is not properly the subject of a Writ. Such an order is appealable, and Olena would be able to recover (should the district court decide it is appropriate), support for the months she did not receive the same. The

arguments Olena makes about child support are nothing more than an attempt to color the court's perception of Enrique. But the fact is, there is a genuine question about whether Enrique is the father (and it reasonably appears he is not), and therefore child support is premature, if it even proves to be appropriate at all.

With respect to the district court's opinion as to the validity of the birth certificate, NRS 52.115 governs the same. At the time the district court's Order with respect to maternity testing was entered, the birth certificate had not been provided to the district court. **OK000077**; **OK000165**. Under NRS 52.115, the birth certificate provided to the district court by Olena was not attested to pursuant to the statute. Therefore, the district court was under no obligation to find the same accurate. There is no "offence to common decency;" Olena's claim is simply an attempt to emotionally manipulate the Court into disregarding the law.

Equally importantly, at this point, Olena will have to leave Ukraine for DNA testing, or the same will be unavoidably delayed by the Russian invasion. Therefore, this point is entirely moot.

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II. The Presumption of Paternity Should Not Be Applied

There is nothing in the record to support the fact that the district court is not applying the presumption of paternity because Olena is a foreigner. Further the presumption effects the burden of proof, it is not a conclusion. In fact, the case of *Hermanson v. Hermanson*, 110 Nev. 1400, 887 P.2d 1241 (1994), is directly on point.

In *Hermanson*, the parties married when the mother was six months pregnant. She contended that the putative father was *not* the biological father, and he contended that he was. The district court ordered blood tests, which provided proof that the putative father was not the father. Thereafter, the district court applied equitable adoption principles to find the putative father was the legal father. The Supreme Court reversed, finding that the application of equitable adoption was not proper, and that the marital presumption "is a *rebuttable* presumption" and therefore reversed the finding that the putative father was the legal father. *Id.* It is worth noting that these claims arose during a divorce action, and the Supreme Court found that NRS 126 applied.

Here, the parties married *after* Olena was already pregnant. Enrique contends he is not the father, and the district court noted that Olena's denial of his claim was "qualified," "not absolute." Although there is a rebuttable presumption, the DNA tests have not been provided to date. *However*, evidence does exist that Enrique is not the father. **ES0090-0092**; **0109**. Therefore, the case continues to proceed under NRS 126, and pursuant to NRS 126.143, temporary support may not be ordered until a trial is set. This is not a procedural gimmick, unless, of course, the gimmick was created by the legislature, which hardly seems like a justifiable argument.

Reliable and credible evidence exists that Enrique is not the father, other than the DNA evidence. However, the district court is encouraged to resolve paternity actions in informal hearings, and NRS 126.051(2) sets forth that DNA testing is conclusive evidence, and therefore could rebut the presumption.² The district court has acted reasonably and within its discretion by attempting to have the DNA testing completed. *If* the testing is not completed, and the district court

Enrique acknowledges this Court has stated that DNA testing does not require the district court to find the presumption rebutted, but it is sufficient evidence to do so, should the district court choose. *Love v. Love*, 114 Nev. 572, 577-578, 959 P.2d 523, 527 (1998).

finds a trial is necessary, *then* the legislature has directed that temporary child support issue. Not before. There has been no gimmick, no delay, and no bias against Olena as a "foreign national." The law is being applied to her as it is applied to everyone.

Further, the district court had amended its Order, prior to the filing of the Writ, to set a status check and allow the parties to provide evidence of a testing and collection protocol in a neutral third party country. **OK000284**. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that no one is trying to prevent the completion of the paternity testing. The district court, relying on the arguments, affidavits and offers of proof expressed valid concerns about the testing protocols (**OK0000077**; **000283**), and when the testing did not occur as Ordered, even attempted to facilitate a different means of testing so that the same could occur expeditiously.

III. The Court Properly Denied the Observation of the Ukraine Consulate

Olena's belief that Article 5 of the *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and Optional Protocol on Disputes*, 21 U.S.T. 77 (1970) ("Vienna Convention") requires the district court to allow the Ukraine Consulate to appear and observe is wrong.

Federal law does not grant a carte blanche under the Vienna convention. Consuls attempting to appear and assist foreign nationals under Article 5 have been denied because they lacked standing under the FRCP. DuPree v. U.S., 559 F.2d 1151 (9th Cir. 1977). They have been denied the ability to file a wrongful death action where the same was not in accordance with state law, despite the convention's authority to allow them to safeguard the interests of foreign nationals (subsection (g)) and arranging representation (subsection (i)). Consul General of Repub. of Indonesia v. Bill's Rentals, Inc., 330 F.3d 1041 (8th Cir. 2003). See also, Risk v. Halvorsen, 936 F.2d 393 (9th Cir. 1991), distinguishing between consular functions which are subject to the laws and regulations of the receiving state and those which are not. Article 5 subsection (h), like subsections (g) and (i), are subject to the laws of the receiving state, in this case Nevada. Therefore, NRS 126.211 is wholly applicable. The Ukraine Consulate is not entitled to appearance, unless they are "necessary to the action or proceeding." In light of the letter of the Consul, that they would only attend to "observe," the district court correctly applied the law in denying the request to have the Consul appear. OK000154; 000259.

IV. The Case Should Not Be Assigned to a Different Department

Nothing in the record shows that the district court has denigrated Ukraine.

Offers of Proof were made at the outset of the matter, which the district court found credible, and which came from credible sources, that there were concerns about potential corruption in Ukraine and other circumstances unique to the case, which may lead to flaws in the testing. This is factual, not a bigoted denigration. Further, Olena is being held to the exact same standard to which any American citizen would be held. The district court has operated within its discretion, based on the facts before it and the determinations of credibility.

The district court did not violate the Vienna Convention. No comments were made as to the personal representations of Olena, or her status as a foreign national. In fact, the district court even clarified that its sole concerns were ensuring the reliability of testing. **OK000283.** The district court's actions, as addressed herein, were perfectly reasonable given the circumstances. "Remarks made by a judge in the context of a court proceeding are not considered indicative of improper bias or prejudice unless they should that the judge has closed his or her mind to the presentation of all evidence." *Schubert v. 8th Judicial Dist. Ct.*, 128 Nev. 933, 381 P.3d 660 (Table)(2012), quoting *Cameron*

v. State, 114 Nev. 1281, 1283, 968 P.2d 1169, 1171 (1998). Making decisions based on conflicting evidence is not "closing one's mind" to the evidence. Nor is applying the law as the court understands it. There is no basis for disqualifying the district court on remand.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, Enrique respectfully requests that this Court decline to grant the relief requested by Olena in this matter, and specifically find that the district court acted properly within its discretion in setting the parameters of the DNA testing and in declining to set temporary child support, and properly analyzed the Vienna Convention with respect to NRS 126.211.

By: RACHEAL H. MASTEL, ESQ., Nevada Bar No. 11646 Attorney for Real Party in Interest

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

- 1. I hereby certify that this Answer complies with the formatting requirements of NRAP 32(a)(4), the typeface requirements of NRAP 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of NRAP 32(a)(6) because this appellate brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Word Perfect X5 in 14-point Times New Roman style;
- 2. I further certify that this appellate brief complies with the page- or type-volume limitations of NRAP 21(d) and NRAP 32(a)(7)(A) because, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by NRAP 32(a)(7)(C), it is proportionately spaced, has a typeface of 14 points or more, and contains 4247 words;
- 3. Finally, I hereby certify that I have read this appellate brief, and to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, it is not frivolous ir interposed for any improper purpose. I further certify that this brief complies with all applicable Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure, in particular NRAP 28(e)(1), which requires every assertion in the brief regarding matters in the record to be supported by appropriate references to page and volume number, if any, of the transcript or appendix where the matter relied upon is to be found. I understand

...

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1	that I may be subject to sanctions in the event that the accompanying brief is not
2	in conformity with the requirements of the Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure.
3 4	Dated this 17-day of March, 2022.
5	
6	By:
7	KAINEN LAW GROUP, PLLC 3303 Novat Street, Suite 200
8	Las Vegas, Nevada, 89117 (702) 823-4900
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1	CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
2	I HEREBY CERTIFY that on theday of March, 2022, I caused
3	to be served the <i>Real Party in Interest's Answer</i> to all interested parties as follows:
4	BY MAIL: Pursuant to NRCP 5(b), I caused a true copy thereof to
5	be placed in the U.S. Mail, enclosed in a sealed envelope, postage fully prepaid
6	thereon, addressed as follows:
7	BY CERTIFIED MAIL: I caused a true copy thereof to be placed in
8	the U.S. Mail, enclosed in a sealed envelope, certified mail, return receipt
9	requested, postage fully paid thereon, addressed as follows:
10	BY FACSIMILE: Pursuant to EDCR 7.26, I caused a true copy
11	thereof to be transmitted, via facsimile, to the following number(s):
12	X BY ELECTRONIC MAIL: Pursuant to EDCR 7.26 and
13	NEFCR Rule 9, I caused a true copy thereof to be served via electronic mail, via
14	Wiznet, to the following e-mail address(es):
15	Marshal Willick
16	
17	JASI II
18	An Employee of
19	KAINEN LAW GROUP, PLLC
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