

TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIRST DISTRICT

In re S.H.

No. 01-25-00782-CV · No. 01-25-00782-CV · Decided December 31, 2025

SUMMARY

The First Court of Appeals of Texas denied S.H.'s petition for writ of mandamus challenging the trial court's removal of the Harris County Public Defender's Office as her counsel in a parental-rights termination proceeding. The court concluded that S.H. failed to establish entitlement to mandamus relief, lifted the stay of the underlying proceedings, and dismissed pending motions as moot.

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Opinion issued December 31, 2025 In The Court of Appeals For The First District of Texas NO. 01-25-00782-CV IN RE S.H., Relator Original Proceeding on Petition for Writ of Mandamus MEMORANDUM OPINION Relator, S.H., filed a petition for writ of mandamus in connection with the underlying suit affecting the parent-child relationship initiated by real party in interest, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (the Department).¹ In the underlying proceedings, the Department seeks to terminate the parental rights of relator to her two minor children.

In her petition for writ of mandamus, relator 1 The underlying case is In the Interest of XXX and XXX, Children, Cause No. 2025-01483J, in the 314th District Court of Harris County, Texas, the Honorable Michelle Moore presiding challenged the trial court's July 31, 2025 "Order Removing the Harris County Public Defender's Office as Counsel for [Relator] and for Appointment of Counsel." Relator argued in her petition for writ of mandamus that the trial court abused its discretion by disqualifying her "counsel of choice," Christine Umeh, an Assistant Public Defender with the Harris County Public Defender's Office.

Relator requested that the Court grant the petition and "order the [r]espondent to vacate the order purporting to disqualify Christine Umeh from representing [relator] in this cause." In connection with her petition for writ of mandamus, relator filed a motion for temporary relief, requesting that the Court "stay all underlying proceedings while her mandamus petition [was] pending." The Court granted relator's motion, stayed the underlying cause, and requested a response to the mandamus petition.

Real party in interest, Margaret Lombardo, the attorney ad litem appointed by the trial court to represent relator in the termination proceedings, filed a response to relator's petition for writ of

mandamus. Relator also filed a reply in support of her mandamus petition.

We conclude that relator failed to establish she is entitled to mandamus relief, and the Court therefore lifts the stay imposed by our September 25, 2025 order and denies relator's petition for writ of mandamus. We dismiss any pending motions as moot. PER CURIAM Panel consists of Justices Guerra, Caughey, and Dokupil. 2