FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AABANY APPLAUDS THE HISTORIC ELEVATION OF HON. LILLIAN WAN AS THE FIRST ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMAN JUSTICE IN THE NEW YORK SUPREME COURT, APPELLATE DIVISION, SECOND DEPARTMENT

New York - May 25, 2022 - The Asian American Bar Association (“AABANY”) applauds the historic elevation of Hon. Lillian Wan to the New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Second Department. Justice Wan is the first and only Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman to serve in this position. AABANY congratulates Justice Wan on this outstanding achievement and looks forward to her contributions to the administration of justice in this important new role. AABANY also commends New York Governor Kathy Hochul for appointing Justice Wan to the Appellate Division, Second Department, and for recognizing her judicial experience and impressive legal career.

Justice Wan’s elevation as the first and only AAPI woman on the Appellate Division, Second Department bench is a cause for celebration and reflection. Since Justice Randall Eng’s retirement in 2017, there have been no AAPI judges on this appellate court. Notably, the Appellate Division, Second Department has jurisdiction over counties with large AAPI populations: Queens (660,631), Kings (373,680) and Nassau (164,201), among others. Justice Wan’s elevation is a step towards increasing the diversity of the New York judiciary, where AAPIs are significantly under-represented. In Queens County, for instance, around 9 percent of judges are Asian although the most recent Queens census reports that Asians constitute 27 percent of the population. The ratios are comparable in Kings County (Brooklyn), where 4 percent of judges are Asian compared to nearly 12 percent of the population in Brooklyn being of AAPI descent. Justice Wan’s history-making appointment to the Second Department gives us further reason to celebrate this May during AAPI Heritage Month, but as the numbers show, much work remains to be done.

Justice Wan is a distinguished jurist with an exemplary career in the law. Last November, she was elected a Justice of the Kings County Supreme Court and took office in January 2022. Before her election to Kings County Supreme Court, she was the first AAPI woman to sit on the New York Court of Claims. In 2012, Justice Wan began her judicial career in Kings County Family Court, after serving as executive agency counsel for the New York City Administration for Children’s Services, litigating neglect and abuse cases in the Family Court Legal Services Division. She was also a Court Attorney-Referee in Kings County Surrogate’s Court. She graduated among the top five of her class at Albany Law School and served on the Albany Law Review. She is currently an Adjunct Professor of Law at Yeshiva University’s Cardozo School of Law and teaches a course called “Lawyering and Legal Writing” to first year law students.
Justice Wan has an equally impressive record of community service. Whether the audience is elementary school fifth-graders, Binghamton University students at commencement, law school students, law practitioners, aspiring jurists, or fellow judges, Justice Wan is always willing to give back by speaking, by organizing, and by leading. Her leadership is further exemplified by her prior role as President of the Asian American Judges Association of New York. In that capacity, Justice Wan worked closely with AABANY.

“AABANY congratulates Justice Wan and applauds the significant role she plays in increasing AAPI representation in the New York judiciary,” said William Ng, President of AABANY. “The AAPI community is fortunate to have Justice Wan as a leader in our efforts to diversify the bench and ensure meaningful participation of AAPIs in the practice of law. We commend her steadfast dedication to public service which has benefitted all New Yorkers. AABANY congratulates her on this historic achievement and looks forward to future accomplishments from her time on the bench. We also thank Governor Hochul for maintaining her commitment to diversifying the New York judiciary and appointing the most qualified judges to the Appellate Division Second Department, an important and influential appellate court.”

For more information, please contact Yang Chen, AABANY Executive Director, at (646) 653-2168, or direct any inquiries to main@aabany.org.

The Asian American Bar Association of New York is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) professional membership organization of attorneys concerned with issues affecting the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Incorporated in 1989, AABANY seeks not only to encourage the professional growth of its members but also to advocate for the AAPI community as a whole. AABANY is a New York regional affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).

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