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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC

Interim President & CEO
Wade Henderson

February 25, 2021

**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF KRISTEN CLARKE
TO BE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR CIVIL RIGHTS**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights – a coalition of more than 220 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States – and the 107 undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Kristen Clarke to serve as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

Ms. Clarke leads one of our nation's premier civil rights organizations – the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law – and she has been a strong champion of civil rights throughout her distinguished career. The Lawyers' Committee is a member of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and we have worked closely with Ms. Clarke during her tenure as the Lawyers' Committee's president and executive director. In that capacity, Ms. Clarke also served on the Board of Directors for The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. It is because of her extensive civil rights record and our close work with Ms. Clarke that we are confident that the Justice Department and the nation would benefit tremendously from her leadership, knowledge, and experience. Ms. Clarke would be the first woman in history to be confirmed by the Senate as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Justice Department.

Ms. Clarke has spent her entire 20-year career fighting for civil rights and racial justice. After graduating from Harvard University and Columbia Law School, she was selected for the Attorney General's Honors Program and spent her first six years as a career attorney in the Civil Rights Division – the same office she has now been nominated to lead. She worked in the Division's Voting Section and handled voting rights and redistricting cases, and she also worked in the Division's Criminal Section, where she prosecuted police misconduct and brutality cases, hate crimes, and human trafficking cases. Having served as a career attorney in the Division, Ms. Clarke will bring a deep knowledge of the office's mission and the urgency of aggressively enforcing our nation's federal civil rights laws.

In 2006, Ms. Clarke went to work for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), a litigating organization that has helped lead the fight for racial justice in America for the past 80 years. Ms. Clarke helped lead LDF's litigation on voting rights and election law, and she helped defend the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act in federal court. In 2011, Ms. Clarke was appointed to head the Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office, where she led broad civil rights enforcement on

matters including criminal justice issues, police reform, education and housing discrimination, fair lending, barriers to reentry, voting rights, immigrants' rights, gender equality, disability rights, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ equality.

In 2016, Ms. Clarke began her tenure as president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, one of the country's largest and most important national civil rights organizations dedicated to the pursuit of equal justice for all. The work of the Lawyers' Committee has always been critical, but never more so than over the past four years, when civil rights organizations have had to take up the mantle of enforcing our federal civil rights laws in the absence of enforcement by the Justice Department under the previous administration. Under Ms. Clarke's leadership, the Lawyers' Committee has served as an essential bulwark in defending civil rights when the Justice Department refused to do so, working through litigation and legislative advocacy to fight hate and bias and to protect and promote voting rights and elections, racial justice, economic justice, educational opportunities, fair housing, criminal justice, digital justice, gender justice, and a fair and accurate census. During her tenure, the organization filed more than 250 cases to safeguard civil rights nationwide.

The breadth and scope of Ms. Clarke's civil rights record is without parallel. Her substantial professional accomplishments span from our nation's leading civil rights organizations to federal and state government service. Her extensive litigation experience and strong leadership skills are necessary to effectively lead the Civil Rights Division today. -Her experience defending access to the ballot is especially notable. She has been involved in virtually all of the Voting Rights Act cases that have been brought in the modern era, including *Shelby County v. Holder*.

Ms. Clarke is universally respected. In announcing his intent to nominate Ms. Clarke, President Biden rightfully described her as "one of the most distinguished civil rights attorneys in America."¹ Former U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin observed: "Kristen Clarke is a force of nature. She has been working tirelessly, around the clock, morning, noon and night to ensure that all Americans share the same rights and privileges as equal members of our society. Without her commitment, past, present and future we would not be confident that this promise would be fulfilled. But with her leadership at the Department of Justice, we can again believe in a just future."² Sherrilyn Ifill, the president and director-counsel of LDF, noted: "Ms. Clarke has led one of the country's most important civil rights organizations, including its national Election Protection voter protection coalition, which has helped to protect the vote and ensure access to the ballot box for millions of voters. Ms. Clarke will undoubtedly understand the priorities needed for the division at this critical moment."³ And Sheila Katz, CEO of the National Council of Jewish Women, said: "as the leader of one of this country's most important civil rights organizations, Kristen Clarke has devoted her life to the pursuit of equal justice for all. Her efforts to combat discrimination throughout her career have helped to strengthen our democracy."⁴

President Biden made an outstanding choice in nominating Kristen Clarke to be the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, and we urge the Senate to confirm Ms. Clarke as quickly as possible. The Civil Rights Division is in desperate need of a course correction, and Ms. Clarke is an ideal person to right the ship.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

A. Philip Randolph Institute

ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services)

Advancement Project National Office

AFL-CIO

Alliance for Justice

Alliance For Youth Action

American Association for Justice

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Federation of Teachers

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Americans for Financial Reform

Americans United for Separation of Church & State

Anti-Defamation League

Arab American Institute

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote

Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Brady

Center for American Progress

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Responsible Lending

Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, California State University, San Bernardino

Clearinghouse On Women's Issues

Coalition on Human Needs

Constitutional Accountability Center

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Daily Kos

Demand Justice

Demos

Drug Policy Alliance

Earthjustice

End Citizens United//Let America Vote Action Fund

Equal Justice Society

Fair Elections Center

Family Equality

Feminist Majority Foundation

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Futures Without Violence
Generation Progress
Girls for Gender Equity
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Indivisible
Japanese American Citizens League
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Justice for Migrant Women
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG)
League of Conservation Voters
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MALDEF
March For Our Lives
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Action Network
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Independent Living
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Redistricting Foundation
National Women's Law Center

Not In Our Town
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
POWER Interfaith
Protect Our Care
Public Advocacy for Kids
Public Citizen
Public Justice
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sierra Club
Sikh Coalition
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
SPLC Action Fund
Supermajority
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
UnidosUS
United State of Women
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Voices for Progress
Voto Latino
YWCA USA

** Signers updated as of March 5, 2021