



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ACCESS, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: AAAED LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE NOMINATION OF KRISTEN CLARKE FOR ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Dear Senators Durbin and Grassley:

On behalf of the American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (AAAED), we strongly urge you to support the confirmation of Kristen Clarke, Esq., as the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Justice. AAAED, a 501c6 membership organization, is the oldest operating association of professionals in the Equal Opportunity profession and is a leader in Equal Opportunity, affirmative action and diversity training and advocacy for professionals in higher education, private industry and government.

Kristen Clarke will bring an unprecedented breadth of experience and civil rights leadership to the Civil Rights Division. A tireless champion of equal justice, Clarke has done groundbreaking and courageous work encompassing virtually every area of civil rights enforcement and litigation. Her credentials make her the right person to lead the Civil Rights Division. She worked in the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section and handled voting rights and redistricting cases. 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.

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Her historic nomination would make her the first woman ever confirmed to lead the Civil Rights Division and the first Black woman to hold the post in any capacity since the Division was created in 1957.

AAAED would also like to thank Kristen Clarke for her support and leadership while she was the President and Executive Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Under Kristen Clarke, the organization supported our LEAD Fund project on Campus Civility, where we conducted listening sessions, a survey and toolkit regarding hate on college campuses.

Clarke's leadership in challenging hate and bias, which poses a grave threat to our national security, makes her uniquely qualified to lead federal civil rights enforcement. Under Clarke, the national Lawyers' Committee launched the James Byrd, Jr. Center to Stop Hate and has worked tirelessly to combat hate crimes, neo-Nazis, and white supremacist groups — including pioneering work to confront the Proud Boys, another organization that has since become infamous due to its alleged role in the deadly insurrection at the Capitol building. Under Clarke's leadership, the National Lawyers' Committee took legal action to remove racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-immigrant hate off the internet and urged social media companies and web service providers to protect impacted communities by enforcing their own terms of service, which prohibit such conduct. This work included shutting down a neo-Nazi website, stormfront.org (one of the largest and longest running hate sites in the world), and achieved a landmark victory against The Daily Stormer and its publisher for engaging in online threats and racial harassment.

As president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Clarke also leads the nonpartisan Election Protection coalition, the nation's largest and longest-running nonpartisan voter protection program. Under Clarke's leadership, the coalition has grown to more than 300 national, state, and local partners. During the historic 2020 election cycle, the Lawyers' Committee filed over 50 voting rights cases pre-and post-election, mobilized volunteer attorneys to fill over 45,000 pro bono volunteer slots, and helped nearly 250,000 Americans access the ballot box.

Clarke is known for bringing together the private and non-profit sectors to promote the rule of law and serve communities. She is respected throughout the legal community and in the corporate sector. She has partnered with hundreds of private law firms and in-house legal departments to mobilize tens of thousands of lawyers in service of defending civil rights. Ms. Clarke has a history of securing landmark agreements, working collaboratively with law enforcement to promote transparency and improved community relations, and engaging corporate leaders on issues of diversity and accountability. Her work has helped strengthen important institutions while also holding them accountable. Clarke has a lifetime of experience working with law enforcement, from the FBI to local police. She has earned the endorsement from law enforcement organizations and leaders in public safety and national security.

Lastly, Kristen Clarke's track record demonstrates a respect for all communities and an appreciation for the diversity that makes our nation strong. She has worked to secure equal justice for all, including for communities of color facing racial and sex discrimination, the LGBTQ+ community, and religious minorities targeted because of their beliefs. As Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau in the New York Office of the Attorney General, Clarke led the establishment of the Religious Rights Unit, helping to combat religious discrimination and promote tolerance. She also secured major settlements with employers to safeguard the rights of Shabbat-observing employees.

We strongly urge you to support the confirmation of Kristen Clarke, Esq. She will serve the Department of Justice and the American people with excellence, dignity and respect for all who are protected by the nation's civil rights laws.

Sincerely,

Shirley J. Wilcher

Shirley J. Wilcher, MA, JD, CAAP
Executive Director