



September 21, 2022

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chair
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the overwhelming majority of Catholics who believe in reproductive and religious freedom and the right to equal protections and individual liberties for all, I write to express Catholics for Choice's unequivocal support for the nomination of Julie Rikelman to serve as a United States Circuit Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

At Catholics for Choice, our work to dismantle obstructions to comprehensive healthcare and to affirm the capacity of all people to make moral decisions about their lives is grounded in seven key principles of social justice. We are called to participate in public life, ensuring that we and our government officials protect and care for all of our neighbors equally, since we are all created in the image of God. The decisions made by our federal courts touch on all of the issues that matter most to us as people of faith — care for the marginalized, access to education, the right to be protected from violence, the right to workplace protections and healthcare, and the right to thrive in our communities with dignity — and have far-reaching consequences on the ability to exercise our civil and human rights. As such, we believe that our federal judiciary must work for all people, not against us.

Catholics for Choice supports the confirmation of independent, qualified, and diverse federal judges with a demonstrated commitment to (1) upholding the First Amendment's protection of freedom of and from religion; (2) safeguarding the fundamental constitutional rights of equal protection, dignity, and privacy; and (3) advancing justice, civil rights, equal rights, and individual liberties for all.

Julie Rikelman embodies these critical criteria. As Catholics, we believe in the separation of church and state and that our judges must ensure we do not impose the religious beliefs of some onto all. Ms. Rikelman arrived in the United States as a refugee from Ukraine, fleeing religious discrimination in the former Soviet Union. Her family was unjustly denied equal opportunities in education and employment and the ability to openly practice their Jewish faith, giving Ms. Rikelman first-hand knowledge of the importance of the principle that true religious liberty involves both freedom of and freedom from religion.

In Good Conscience

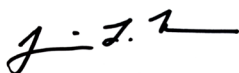
A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, Ms. Rikelman would bring an essential breadth and depth of legal experience to the First Circuit. She clerked for Justice Dana Fabe, the first woman appointed to the Alaska Supreme Court, and Judge Morton Greenberg of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. She has represented large corporations, business executives, reproductive health care providers, families, and individuals in all manner of legal disputes including contract issues, employment discrimination, and constitutional law. Her varied career has only strengthened her understanding of equal justice under the law and would undoubtedly anchor her commitment to fairness for all parties who might come before her as a federal judge.

At the same time, Ms. Rikelman has developed a deep expertise in over a decade of employment at the Center for Reproductive Rights, directing the national litigation strategy for this premier legal organization dedicated to protecting access to essential healthcare and serving as lead and co-counsel in numerous precedent-setting constitutional cases in both state and federal courts. Notably, she has argued two landmark reproductive rights cases before the Supreme Court of the United States.

The outcomes of these cases impact all Americans, especially those who already suffer as a result of the sinful structures of systemic racism, gender inequality, economic insecurity, and immigration restrictions. Ms. Rikelman's demonstrated ability to effectively handle such monumental cases as well as those impacting only the named parties is further evidence of her dedication to ensuring equal protections and individual liberties for everyone. In her own words, Ms. Rikelman affirmed that "[m]ore fundamental than my view about any particular constitutional right is my commitment to the Constitution and the rule of law, and its centrality to a legal system that provides fairness and equal justice for all." Catholics for Choice is honored to support her nomination to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to Shannon Russell, Director of Policy, at srussell@catholicsforchoice.org with any questions or for additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. L. Manson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jamie L. Manson
President, Catholics for Choice