



March 14, 2024

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Confirmation of Sparkle Sooknanan to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

Dear Senators Durbin and Graham:

I am the President and Dean of Brooklyn Law School, and write in my personal capacity to offer my strongest possible support for the confirmation of one of our law school's most accomplished graduates, Sparkle Sooknanan, as a Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

Ms. Sooknanan graduated *summa cum laude* from Brooklyn Law School in 2010. While this was well before I became Dean of the Law School, to say that her reputation lives on is an understatement. She is nothing short of legendary – by all accounts one of the very finest graduates that Brooklyn Law School has ever produced in its 123-year history and her example continues to be an inspiration for students and faculty alike nearly 15 years after her graduation.

Ms. Sooknanan's extraordinary talents and professional accomplishments are made even more compelling by her inspiring personal story and background. Her story of overcoming long odds by dint of her intelligence, ambition, perseverance, and hard work is the quintessential Brooklyn Law School story – personifying Brooklyn's proud tradition of opening its doors to talented and ambitious students from every conceivable background and preparing them for careers of enormous impact. But, in truth, it is also the quintessential *American* story of courage, opportunity, and service. Born in Trinidad to a family of modest financial means, she came to the United States at age 16 to pursue an education – the first in her family to attend college – thanks to a scholarship to attend St. Francis College in Brooklyn. Despite her young age, and navigating college in a new country far from her family, she excelled at her studies and as a student leader and graduated *summa cum laude*. She then went on to earn an MBA,

again with honors, and began work as a manager with a health care company, HIP Health Plan. It was while working full-time in this role that she enrolled as a student at Brooklyn Law School, attending classes at night at the end of a full and demanding work day.

As a law student, Sparkle Sooknanan once again quickly emerged as a student of rare promise and ability, a once-in-a-generation talent who dazzled her professors and fellow students with her intelligence and analytical acumen, but also with her unsurpassed work ethic, compassion, and commitment to service. Faculty who knew Ms. Sooknanan as a student testify glowingly about her gifts as a student and a lawyer.

A small sample of testimonials from faculty colleagues illustrates the exceptional respect that Ms. Sooknanan earned during her time as a law student. Ted Janger, the David M. Barse Professor of Law and a leading scholar of bankruptcy and commercial law, wrote of Ms. Sooknanan while recommending her for a Supreme Court clerkship: "Sparkle is, I believe, the very best student I have had in my 16 years of teaching, and is, perhaps, the most impressive student to come through Brooklyn Law School since I have been here. I have taught at Penn, Harvard and Yale, and I would compare Sparkle favorably to the very best students those law schools have to offer." Professor Janger reports that, a decade later, this assessment still holds true.

In his recommendation, Professor Janger noted that Ms. Sooknanan was consistently a "curve buster" in her classes, never receiving less than an A and receiving multiple grades of A+. She is also a brilliant writer. Ms. Sooknanan's law review note took on "an issue that merge[d] complex issues of bankruptcy law with difficult questions relating to disclosure that bedevil securities lawyer. It was a brave topic for a law student to take on, and Sparkle handled it beautifully. She was able to make a complex topic seem simple, and to propose a solution that ... has helped bring clarity to the topic." Indeed, on two occasions, he was "approached *sua sponte*, once by another law professor and once by a lawyer, both of whom said how impressed they were with the article." Ms. Sooknanan was selected to serve as Executive Articles Editor of the Law Review in her third year and did the job with grace and aplomb.

By all accounts, Ms. Sooknanan was a stand-out not only academically, but also as a collegial student leader who was deeply respected by her peers. Dana Brakman Reiser, a Centennial Professor of Law, former Vice Dean, and leading scholar on corporations and non-profit entities, recounts: "During her time at BLS, I ... saw Sparkle in action as one of the top performers and leaders in our academic extracurricular activities. She sought my advice when she served as coach to the tax moot court team, which was arguing a difficult case centered on trust taxation and the meaning of trusts, an area in which I teach. Although Sparkle had not yet taken a course in Trusts and Estates, she mastered the conceptually complex trust questions needed to understand and guide students through the problem and asked me extremely well-conceived questions." She coached the Duberstein Bankruptcy Moot Court team, and was named to the National Team, which ranked as semifinalists at the National Level and won the Best Brief award. On the strength of this performance, Sparkle was elected President of the Moot Court Honor Society; a role she fulfilled with distinction during her fourth year at the Law School."

Professor Brakman Reiser also found Ms. Sooknanan's work as her research assistant to be superb: "I was fortunate enough to hire Sparkle as my research assistant during her final year. She helped me to research and edit two articles and an essay, all on complex issues of nonprofit/for-profit hybridization – a field in which she had no prior legal background. I can say without hesitation that Sparkle was the best

research assistant I have ever had, and likely ever will. Her research skills are unmatched, she is fastidiously attentive to detail, and she is unafraid to ask questions and raise potential areas of concern. She was always careful, thoughtful, and had great respect for her own work and mine. In this role, I found Sparkle to be nothing short of extraordinary.”

The exceptional promise that her professors saw in Ms. Sooknanan’s talent was quickly realized upon her graduation from Brooklyn Law School *summa cum laude*. She first clerked for Judges Eric Vitaliano on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York and Guido Calabresi on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. She then joined the Civil Appellate Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, before being hired as the first Brooklyn Law School graduate to clerk on the United States Supreme Court, clerking for Justice Sonia Sotomayor during the 2013-2014 Term. Her post-clerkship career has been no less distinguished; she quickly became a partner at the Jones Day firm, then joined the U.S. Department of Justice, serving first as Deputy Associate Attorney General before transitioning to Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division.

In short, Ms. Sooknanan was and is a phenomenon. In a life filled with “firsts” and a career filled with superlatives, she stands out for her exceptional ability, her relentless drive to serve, her humility and compassion, and her rock-solid integrity and professionalism. As Dean of Brooklyn Law School, I take special pride in Ms. Sooknanan’s impressive accomplishments and in knowing that she will join a distinguished group of other Brooklyn Law School graduates currently serving on the federal bench: Judges Leo Glasser, Edward Korman and most recently, Ramon Reyes, all of the Eastern District of New York, as well as Judge Nelson Román of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, Judge Claire Kelly, of the Court of International Trade, and Judge Stephen Wilson of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. As Americans, we can all take enormous pride in Sparkle Sooknanan’s story of personal initiative, success, and service.

Sparkle Sooknanan will be an exceptionally qualified and distinguished U.S. District Judge and I strongly urge you to confirm her appointment at the earliest opportunity. Thank you for your consideration and do not hesitate to call on me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Meyer", written in a cursive style.

David Meyer
President and Joseph Crea Dean