

March 26, 2024



**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF SPARKLE SOOKNANAN
TO THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 240 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Sparkle Sooknanan to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The Leadership Conference intends to include your position on the confirmation of Ms. Sooknanan in our voting record for the 118th Congress.

Ms. Sooknanan's impressive career makes her an excellent choice for this position. Currently, she serves as the principal deputy assistant attorney general in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Before assuming this role, she was the deputy associate attorney general in the DOJ's Office of the Associate Attorney General, and she has also served as an attorney with the Civil Division of the DOJ. Ms. Sooknanan also spent time in private practice, first as an associate and then as a partner at Jones Day. She is a graduate of Saint Francis College, Hofstra University, and Brooklyn Law School. Ms. Sooknanan clerked for Judge Eric Vitaliano on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, Judge Guido Calabresi on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Ms. Sooknanan's depth and breadth of legal experience and her dedication to public service is well suited for this role.

Ms. Sooknanan's commitment to equal justice is evidenced throughout her entire career. While she was in private practice, in addition to her full caseload, she spent a considerable portion of her time on pro bono work, completing more than 3,000 hours in just six years.¹ Some examples of this work include criminal defense for those unable to afford an attorney,² partnering with the Children's Law Center to provide legal counsel to children in need,³ working with her firm's Laredo Project, which provides legal services to individuals in immigration proceedings at the U.S.- Mexico border,⁴ and representing members of the Charlottesville city council after they were sued for their decision to remove Confederate statues in their public parks.⁵ When the opportunity arose to return to public service, Ms. Sooknanan joined the U.S. Department of Justice. In her role as the deputy associate attorney general, she has overseen and managed much of the litigation from the Civil Rights and Civil Divisions, where she worked on many legal matters critical to our communities — including protecting access to the ballot box, ensuring fairness in housing and employment, and defending the rights of people with disabilities.⁶ Last fall, she was appointed to

¹ [Questionnaire for Judicial Nominees](#) at 29, U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY (accessed March 2024).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Payne v. City of Charlottesville*, 102 Va. Cir. 399E (2019), *rev'd and vacated*, 299 Va. 515, 856 S.E.2d 203 (2021).

⁶ [Nominations Hearing](#) at 1:44:30, U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY (accessed March 2024).

serve as the principal deputy assistant attorney general in the Civil Rights Division, where she worked closely with the division's assistant attorney general managing the division's litigation to enforce our civil rights laws and protections.⁷ Ms. Sooknanan has shown her dedication to civil rights and respect for the rule of law, and this experience is greatly needed in our federal judiciary.

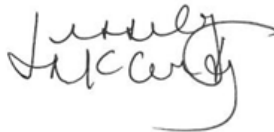
In addition to the important professional experience she would bring to the bench, Ms. Sooknanan's lived experiences would also bring critical perspective to the judiciary. When she was only 16 years old, Ms. Sooknanan immigrated on her own to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago to attend college.⁸ If confirmed, she would join the extremely small number of Indo-Caribbean federal lifetime judges. Public trust in the judiciary is strengthened when our courts reflect the rich diversity of our country.⁹ Different lived experiences bring varied perspectives to our federal courts that are crucial to improving judicial decision-making.¹⁰ The confirmation of Ms. Sooknanan, whose compelling professional and personal experiences would enrich our judiciary, would be an important step towards ensuring that our federal courts reflect and represent the diversity of our nation.

Ms. Sooknanan is an excellent choice for this position, and we strongly urge the Senate to confirm her to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarenstejn, senior director of the fair courts program, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Maya Wiley
President & CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

⁷ [Questionnaire for Judicial Nominees](#) at 12, U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY (accessed March 2024).

⁸ Rhonda Krystal Rambally, [Sparkle Shines with Sotomayor](#), TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO GUARDIAN (March 2, 2013).

⁹ Maya Sen, [Diversity, Qualifications, and Ideology: How Female and Minority Judges Have Changed, or Not Changed, Over Time](#), WIS. L. REV. 367 (2017).

¹⁰ Berry, Kate, [Building a Diverse Bench: Selecting Federal Magistrate and Bankruptcy Judges](#), BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW AND AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIAL DIVISION (2017).