

# The Just Criminal Justice Group, LLC



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Owner/Manager

February 5, 2024

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

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

**RE: Consideration of the nomination of The Honorable Melissa R. DuBose, Associate Judge of the Rhode Island District Court, to serve on the Federal District Court for the District of Rhode Island.**

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham:

Please accept this letter in support of the nomination of The Honorable Melissa R. DuBose, Associate Judge of the Rhode Island District Court, to serve on the Federal District Court for the District of Rhode Island. It has been my pleasure to know and collaborate with Judge DuBose in a wide variety of contexts, almost from the very day that she began practicing law about twenty (20) years ago. This diversity, breadth, and length of experience allows me to provide the committee with invaluable information and insights regarding Judge DuBose's character, integrity, empathy, and judicial temperament.

During her time in the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, I had several occasions to observe these qualities in my dealings with her. As a public defender, she prosecuted cases involving clients of mine. I recall one difficult case with her in particular involving the issue of whether or not a client was on probation and if appropriate notice had been given to bring my client before the court. I distinctly recall enthusiastic exchanges between us (perhaps attributable to the probation reform policy work I was engaged in at the time) including detailed discussions of the applicable law and the pertinent facts in dispute. I recall Judge DuBose's thorough professionalism; her preparation and understanding of the issues involved in the case; and at all times acting as a tenacious, prepared, and thoughtful advocate for the State. As you can tell, this case generally and my experience with Judge Dubose made quite an

impression on me that I have carried for a long time, even though she prevailed in the matter and my client did not.

Although I did not have an opportunity to work with Judge DuBose after she left the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office for private practice, I did renew our professional acquaintance once she ascended to the Rhode Island District Court. These contacts included the representation of indigents accused of crime that appeared before her, but more frequently her concerted efforts to help improve the quality of justice provided in our state. This included her work in a variety of contexts including her enthusiastic and high-quality contributions to continuing legal education; community outreach; and important and much needed reforms of our state's criminal justice system.

Without fail, defendants, victims, witnesses, and anyone and everyone appearing in her court is always treated with dignity and respect, something that in my experience is not always easy to achieve, and certainly not on a consistent basis. And I recall in particular an educational program that I organized for the Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers in May, 2023, involving the Brown University School of Public Health and Alpert Medical School and the Center for Health and Justice Transformation at Lifespan. Entitled *ALLIES NOT ADVERSARIES: Teaching Clinicians, Lawyers, and Social Workers How to Collaborate to Support Patients Involved in the Criminal Justice System*, this program was multi-faceted. It recognized Rhode Island's leadership position in this inspired and important new endeavor to holistically address the root causes of crime (including the impact of mental health issues, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders on criminal behavior) by stressing treatment over incarceration while also effectuating communication and difficult conversations between judges, prosecutors, criminal defense lawyers, police, probation, and a variety of medical and other treatment providers. Judge DuBose's many contributions to this program (grounded in her belief in and embrace of these principles in practice in her court) were essential to making the program the success that I know it was.

In my opinion the appointment of Judge DuBose to the Rhode Island Supreme Court's Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness (CORAEF) by Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell was an inspired one.<sup>1</sup> Formed shortly after the murder of George Floyd and after several incidents that were perhaps in response to it that occurred in the City of Providence, that group has done consistently important and groundbreaking work to improve both the reality and appearance of justice and fairness. From that extensive list two efforts come to mind. The first was the effort to eliminate the incarceration of indigent criminal defendant's due solely to their inability to pay exorbitant and out of control court costs, assessments, and mandatory fees regardless of their inability to pay. This was an issue of particular interest to me as the Public Defender's Liaison to the Rhode Island General Assembly. My work on this issue began in 2007. I believe that finally the ultimate success of this legislative reform effort in 2022 is due in no small part to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.courts.ri.gov/PublicResources/fairness/Pages/default.aspx>

Judge DuBose's participation in that process and her embrace of the CORAEF's recommendations in practice in her court, something that eventually caught on with other judges and courts. Happily, the General Assembly eventually followed suit as well.

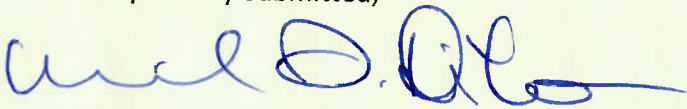
I also recall attending numerous meetings convened by the CORAEF with an extensive list of community groups and criminal justice stakeholders. These meetings occurred in a variety of communities. Judge DuBose's acute attention and response to the concerns expressed by individuals not only stands out in my mind but is in my experience of more than forty (40) years, unprecedented.

I simply cannot imagine a better person than The Honorable Melissa R. DuBose to serve on the Federal District Court for the District of Rhode Island. I am therefore respectfully requesting that the Senate Judiciary Committee recommend that advice and consent be given to her nomination so that the full Senate may consider her extraordinary qualifications and accomplishments.

Thank you for this opportunity to make my thoughts known in this important matter. Please feel free to contact me if you need or require any additional information.

Again, thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael A. DiLauro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael A. DiLauro, Esq.