



September 17, 2024

Hon. Dick Durbin
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter to convey my support for Sharad Desai as a federal judge in the United States District Court for the District of Arizona, based in Phoenix.

During my career, I have often been asked to write letters of recommendation, but rarely have I had experience and observation directly applicable to the role for which they are requesting endorsement. In this case, however, I have seen Sharad in unique and specific circumstances that are directly relevant to the work of the federal judge.

Sharad is known to me because he is a Flinn Scholar alumnus. In 1999, he was one of 20 students in Arizona selected for the highly coveted, merit-based Flinn Scholarship, from among hundreds of applicants with excellent academic credentials and demonstrated community leadership. The criteria and selection process to determine the Flinn Scholars are rigorous, and only high-achieving, high-character individuals are awarded the scholarship.

The mission of the Flinn Foundation is to improve the quality of life in Arizona to benefit future generations. Sharad used the opportunity afforded by the scholarship to lean in and live out the mission of the Flinn Foundation. After his *magna cum laude* undergraduate degrees, he went on to law school, where he graduated *cum laude* and held several internships that provided him a platform of depth and breadth. He worked in the Arizona State Senate as a legislative intern; performed research and drafted capital habeas petitions and appellate briefs; conducted research regarding the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 as a summer law clerk; and clerked for the Vice Chief Justice at the Arizona Supreme Court. After law school, he worked for a law firm, then held progressively responsible positions at Honeywell International, where today he performs the role of Vice President and General Counsel – ISC, IT (Information Technology), and Global Operations. Significant corporate responsibilities rest on his shoulders, but when I spoke with him about his legal career, he cited his most important case as pro bono counsel to pretrial detainees in the Maricopa County jails who suffered from unsafe and unconstitutional jail conditions.

Outside of his employment, Sharad also contributes to Arizona. He and his public-defender spouse are raising their three children in our state. He is an active contributor in the community as a former board member of Childsplay Theater and as a law-student mentor for both the South Asian Bar Association of Arizona and the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity.



In 2019, I had the opportunity to observe Sharad in a very specific and applicable circumstance, as a member of the Flinn Scholars Selection Committee. That year, more than 1000 students applied for the 20 spots as Flinn Scholars. Sharad worked alongside fellow selectors of differing backgrounds, education, and experiences to select the class. He carefully applied the merit and leadership criteria that were set, paying special attention to what each student achieved with the resources at their disposal. Obviously, this differs greatly across communities and the state. During deliberations, Sharad showed an ability to listen carefully to the opinions of other members of the Selection Committee, identify areas of agreement and divergence, then discern. As he had during the student interviews, he thoughtfully and considerately challenged the positions of his colleagues when appropriate. He was respectful. He was empathetic and applied a level of insight to each situation independently, while remaining focused on achieving the best outcomes. These behaviors are critical to the performance of a federal judge.

Still early in his career, Sharad is on top of his legal game. He has found success as a private-practice litigator and now as an executive corporate counsel, yet he is interested in serving the public as a judge. I believe Arizona and the nation would benefit from him doing so. I highly recommend him for the service role of federal judge in the United States District Court for the District of Arizona.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy McLeod".

Tammy McLeod, Ph.D.
President & CEO