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Senator Dick Durbin
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C.

Senator Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley

It is my honor to submit this letter of support on behalf of Judge Charnelle Bjelkengren in support of her nomination for a federal judicial appointment to the United States District Court – Eastern District of Washington. I had the great privilege to work with and supervise Charnelle at the Washington State Attorney General's Office where she spent her formative years as an attorney and had a stellar 12-year career. As the former Spokane Interdivisional Section Chief for the Washington State Attorney General's Office (and now General Counsel for Gonzaga University), I supervised Charnelle from 2004 - 2009. During that time, she was the sole Assistant Attorney General in Spokane representing the Department of Licensing and Employment Security Division in multiple Eastern Washington counties as well as chief counsel for a state community college. It was a significant caseload which she handled with exceptional skill and competence.

Charnelle possesses keen intellectual ability, a strong work ethic and impeccable integrity. She rapidly attained expertise in the Licensing and Administrative Law Division resulting in her selection as the statewide judicial review coordinator. In this role she trained and mentored other Assistant Attorneys General statewide and was responsible for coordinating all unemployment benefits appeals and exercising quality control over appellate practice.

As her supervisor I had the opportunity to observe her work directly as well as conduct 360-degree evaluations of her performance that included feedback from clients, Judges, and colleagues. A highly respected attorney, she always received high praise and extremely positive feedback.

In addition to her strong legal skills, Charnelle possesses excellent interpersonal skills and is known for her kindness, compassion, and thoughtfulness. All of these attributes along with her positive attitude, strength of character, and fair mindedness contribute to her qualifications, enabling her to handle whatever issues may arise in her courtroom.

Based on her professional reputation, it came as no surprise in 2019 that Charnelle was appointed to the Spokane County Superior Court bench by Governor Jay Inslee. I had the honor of speaking at her investiture and would like to include here some of the words I shared because they hold true today:

. . . I know she will do an outstanding job on the bench, just as she did at the Attorney General's Office, continuing to distinguish herself as a member of the Court. Her service as a Judge will be defined by her own standards of excellence and the same dedication to public service and kindness of heart that characterized her time at the Attorney General's Office.

. . . She will see to it that all persons who come before her are treated courteously, respectfully, and most importantly with fairness and justice. The decisions she renders will be grounded in the law and she will do what is necessary and right. I am confident she will serve the Court with great distinction and honor and that the best days of her legal career are yet to come.

And Charnelle has lived up to those words. In her work as a Superior Court Judge, Charnelle quickly developed an excellent reputation and is known for her hard work, preparation, fairness, thoughtful decision-making and respectful treatment of all those involved in the legal process.

I give Charnelle my highest recommendation and am confident she will be an outstanding Federal judicial officer, given her strong record of success.

If you or any of your colleagues have any questions or would like additional information, I would be happy to follow up with you. Thank you for considering this letter.

Sincerely,

Maureen McGuire

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