

March 5, 2021

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chair
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Re: Gender Justice Sign-on Letter in Support of Vanita Gupta to be Associate Attorney General of the United States

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

We write on behalf of 58 gender justice; reproductive health, rights, and justice; and anti-violence organizations unified in strong support for the confirmation of Vanita Gupta as Associate Attorney General of the United States. The Associate Attorney General (ASG) is the third-ranking official at the Department of Justice who would advise and assist the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General. Because this role will have decision-making authority over matters that impact women, girls, and all people who face discrimination, including enforcement of Title VII, Title IX, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE), and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), as well as core constitutional protections, such as the Equal Protection Clause and the right to privacy, it must be filled by a proven champion and ally on gender justice. With decades of civil rights and gender justice experience, Vanita Gupta is precisely the dedicated, highly qualified civil rights champion we need to defend the bedrock principles of equal justice and advance the core mission of the Department of Justice.

Vanita Gupta is exactly the leader we need at the Department of Justice. She is a seasoned civil rights attorney, who has held high-level roles in the Justice Department and prominent civil rights organizations. As the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Ms. Gupta leads the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition to fight for equality and opportunity in the nation's most pressing civil rights issues. When Ms. Gupta was Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division and Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, she oversaw a wide range of criminal and civil enforcement efforts including advancing policing and criminal justice reform; prosecuting hate crimes and human trafficking; promoting disability rights; protecting the rights of LGBTI individuals and combating discrimination in education, housing, employment, and lending and voting. Additionally, as Deputy Legal Director of the ACLU and Director of its Center for Justice, she worked on reform initiatives pertaining to federal and state policing, sentencing, drug policy and immigration detention facilities. Ms. Gupta's understanding of the inner workings of the Department and the depth and breadth of her work in civil rights makes her the perfect candidate to address the dire situation in the Justice Department.

Ms. Gupta has built her career on championing civil rights for all people, and these values and principles are especially apparent through her work supporting the intersection of racial justice and

gender justice. Under her direction, the Civil Rights Division broadened its pattern and practice litigation to better serve survivors of sexual violence and developed an advocate-informed guidance for improving law enforcement responses to sexual assault and domestic violence.¹ Through her leadership, the Leadership Conference expanded its scope by joining amicus briefs and coordinating letters and comments supporting key gender justice issues such as blocking medically unnecessary and burdensome state restrictions on abortion care², safeguarding unions,³ preventing entities from using religion as an excuse for discriminating based on sex,⁴ fortifying the Affordable Care Act protections, supporting equal pay, stopping rollbacks to Title IX, and opposing extremist anti-gender justice judicial and executive nominees.⁵ Ms. Gupta's collaboration with diverse stakeholders better highlights the real-life effects the laws would have on the most disenfranchised and marginalized communities. And we are confident she will bring that intersectional approach to her leadership at the Department of Justice.

Vanita Gupta's nomination as Associate Attorney General comes at a critical time. Over the past four years, the U.S. Department of Justice has utterly failed to fulfill its mission of protecting and enforcing the legal rights of all people in America and instead attacked Black and Brown communities and advanced deleterious civil rights positions outside the bounds of the constitution. It backed unconstitutional abortion restrictions and in a move decried by legal scholars and prior DOJ officials, argued that the Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional; rolled back longstanding protections for survivors of sexual violence; reversed course and encouraged discrimination in schools, workplaces, and health care; undermined and opposed LGBTQ equality efforts; challenged affirmative action programs; initiated the cruel and unjust policy separating immigrant children from their parents at the border; allowed rampant voter suppression; and otherwise weakened civil rights protections. The Department must prioritize undoing the harm and trauma over the past four years.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the reckoning on racial justice, the Department urgently needs to defend and protect individuals' access to comprehensive health care, including abortion and birth control, prevent sexual violence and hate crimes, fight discrimination in schools, work, housing, and enhance voting rights and police accountability. We need Department of Justice leaders who are committed to ending discrimination; challenging white supremacy and hate violence; and advancing racial, gender, disability, ethnic, religious, immigrant, and LGBTQ justice. Now more than ever, these efforts must be led by an Associate Attorney General with a deep background in civil rights who will advance racial and gender equity and will repair trust in the Department of Justice's ability to uphold the civil and constitutional rights and legal protections of all.

Ms. Gupta has the experience and the commitment to equal justice to restore the mission and vitality of the Department of Justice at this pivotal moment. Additionally, Ms. Gupta's confirmation would be historic as she would be the first woman of color and first civil rights lawyer to hold this

¹ [Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias \(justice.gov\)](https://www.justice.gov/identifying-and-preventing-gender-bias)

² *June Med. Servs. v. Rebekah Gee* (Nos. 18-1323, 18-1460)

³ *Janus v. American Fedn. Of State* (No. 16-1466), 138 S. Ct. 2448 (2018)

⁴ *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* (No. 19-123)

⁵ See Gupta Senate Judiciary Committee Questionnaire, question 12(c) pages 12-35

position. The leadership of the Biden-Harris administration should reflect the lived experiences of those most impacted by discrimination, racism, and unequal institutions, and Ms. Gupta's nomination is an important step closer toward diversity and inclusion in the Department of Justice. We offer strong support for Vanita Gupta to be Associate Attorney General of the United States and urge the Committee to approve her nomination quickly.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance

A Woman's Choice of Jacksonville

A Woman's Choice of Raleigh

A Woman's Choice of Greensboro

A Woman's Choice of Charlotte

Advocates for Youth

All* Above All Action Fund

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Federation of Teachers

California National Organization for Women

Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Cobalt

Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Feminist Majority Foundation

Florida Interfaith Coalition for Reproductive Health and Justice

Futures Without Violence

Gender Justice

Georgetown Center on Poverty & Inequality

Girls for Gender Equity

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Jewish Women International (JWI)

Justice for Migrant Women

KWH Law Center for Social Justice and Change

League of Women Voters of the United States

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault

MomsRising

Monroe County NOW

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Jewish Women
National Crittenton
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
National Women's Political Caucus
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Ohio National Organization for Women
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproaction
SisterLove Inc.
TIME'S UP Now
Ujima Inc., The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
UltraViolet
United State of Women
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Vote Run Lead
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Women's Medical Fund
YWCA USA