

September 16, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Honorable Jamal Whitehead, Judicial Nominee to the United States District Court for the Western District of WA**

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

My name is Christopher Sanders, and I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Jamal Whitehead, a judicial nominee for the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. I urge you to confirm him as expeditiously as possible. While I write this letter in my personal capacity only, I am writing through my lens as a mentee of Jamal's and also through the lens of my professional experience as a public defender, as a person of color, and as a person who like Mr. Whitehead has also overcome the challenges of living with a disability. Through this lens I believe that Mr. Whitehead's record of mentorship, leadership and accomplishment, and his diverse perspective will greatly enhance our bench.

Mr. Whitehead is a longtime mentor, and he has excelled in that role. From my first year of law school in 2010, where he was an alumni mentor to new students like myself, through present day, he encouraged others to work as hard as we can, to keep our focus on justice, equality, and fairness, all while doing all of the practical things we can do to be outstanding servants and lawyers. More recently, Mr. Whitehead serves on the board of the Washington Judicial Institute, where he uses the judicial institution's work to mentor and encourage generations of new or aspiring judicial officers, again putting others before his own self and career. Mr. Whitehead's long record as a mentor shows that he is selfless, and that he is genuinely committed to improving our legal community and the local bar however he can. We need this kind of selflessness on our bench.

Excellence in our judiciary also requires that we have judicial officers who are well-respected leaders and accomplished members of our legal communities. Jamal Whitehead certainly fits that bill. As a well-respected leader, Mr. Whitehead lead the Loren Miller Bar Association, one of the Pacific Northwest's oldest and largest minority bar associations. He is an accomplished lawyer for working people too. For example, he recently won a landmark immigrants' rights case, where he brought fairness, dignity, and justice to everyday working people, even as they remained in immigration custody. To me, these qualities show that Mr. Whitehead takes his legal work seriously, as he understands the positive impact that he can have on our community, and I believe he will carry that record of leadership and accomplishment with him to the bench.

Finally, I believe that it is important that we have judicial officers who reflect the communities that they serve. Mr. Whitehead is not only a well-respected leader of color, but he also brings an important perspective as a judicial nominee who overcame a disability to lead a life of service and distinction. While disabilities may be common in the United States in general, we have very few judges who may personally know what it is like to live with them. It is very important that we have judges who bring these kinds of perspectives to the bench because it can allow those judges to better understand the challenges of the people who come before them. I saw how important this kind of perspective can be, through my career as a public defender representing everyday people in court. When it comes to the judiciary, representation and diverse perspectives do not just matter, they are critically important. Representation is one of the ingredients that allows us to have a fair and just judiciary, one that can best understand everyday people. Mr. Whitehead brings this much-needed perspective.

Mr. Whitehead reflects the best of our local legal community and I hope that you will confirm him as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Christopher M. Sanders