



March 17, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chair  
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: The National Urban League's Support for Judge Jackson SCOTUS Nomination

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

On behalf of the National Urban League's 92 affiliates in 37 states and the District of Columbia, we are writing to urge the committee to swiftly consider and work with Senate leadership to confirm Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court of the United States. As a historic civil rights organization that advocates for the constitutional protections of all Americans, the National Urban League strongly supports Jackson's nomination and believes that, based on her qualifications, diverse experience, and judicial record, she will rigorously protect the civil rights fought that our community has fought for and, as a former public defender, bring a much-needed perspective to the bench.

Judge Jackson's judicial experience makes her more than qualified to sit on the United States' highest court. After graduating from Harvard University and Harvard Law School, she completed clerkships for Judge Pattie Saris on the U.S. District Court for Massachusetts, Judge Bruce Selya on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and Justice Stephen Breyer on the Supreme Court. After being nominated to serve as a judge on the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia by former President Obama in 2012 and unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 2013, Judge Jackson served on the court until 2021, when President Biden nominated, and the Senate confirmed, her nomination to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

In addition to being the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court, Judge Jackson will bring much needed diversity of experience to the Court, not seen since the late former Justice Thurgood Marshall, by being the first public defender to serve on the Supreme Court. Public defenders fight daily to ensure that indigent individuals and people of color are fairly represented in our court systems, which often perpetuate injustices against these communities. Judge Jackson's unique experience will bring an understanding of the realities of the criminal justice system and its impact on individual defendants to the Court, which currently consists of former prosecutors, academics, and corporate attorneys.

Judge Jackson not only has an awareness of the disparities in the criminal justice system, but worked tirelessly on addressing the sentencing disparities of the crack-cocaine epidemic and implementing

other sentencing reforms as assistant special counsel and later vice chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission. During Judge Jackson’s tenure, she supported the Commission’s work to retroactively apply a recently enacted statute that reduced the crack/powder cocaine sentencing disparity, which had a significant impact on convicted Black, indigenous, and other people of color, who are more likely to be convicted for nonviolent crack cocaine offenses than powder cocaine offenses.

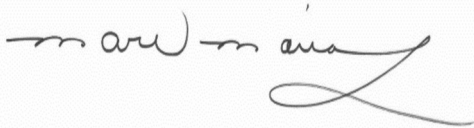
Her commitment to fairness and integrity on the bench can also be seen in her extensive judicial record. In her roughly 600 judicial opinions, she has upheld constitutional and legal protections for those who are traditionally discounted in our court system, such as individuals with disabilities, members of the labor community, and those exercising their first amendment right to freedom of speech. An example of this is her decision in *Pierce v. District of Columbia*, where Judge Jackson ruled in favor of a deaf inmate who was kept in “abject isolation” and did not receive accommodations for his disability, despite his requests for an interpreter.<sup>1</sup>

She has also upheld decisions that preserve the basic tenants of our democracy. In a recent ruling for the case *Trump v. Thompson*, Judge Jackson joined a decision that rejected former President Trump’s attempts, through his claim of executive privilege, to block the House of Representatives from having access to documents related to the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.<sup>2</sup>

Judge Jackson’s concurring opinion in *I.A. v. Merrick Garland*, issued a day before her nomination, is emblematic of her diligence and careful review of the cases that are brought before her.<sup>3</sup> In her opinion, she writes: “Written opinions are the most accurate historical record of what the supervising court thought of those events. And in a common law system of case-by-case adjudication, that history need not, and should not, be cavalierly discarded.”<sup>4</sup>

In light of her qualifications, unimpeachable record, and diversity of experience, we ask that you work with to ensure a respectful, thorough, and swift confirmation process for Judge Jackson. For more information, please contact Yvette Badu-Nimako, Vice President of Policy and Legislative Affairs at [ybadu@nul.org](mailto:ybadu@nul.org).

Sincerely,



Marc H. Morial  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
National Urban League



Joi O. Chaney  
Executive Director, Washington Bureau  
Senior Vice President, Policy & Advocacy  
National Urban League

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<sup>1</sup> 128 F.Supp.3d 250 (D.D.C. 2015).

<sup>2</sup> 20 F.4th 10 (D.C. Cir. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> No. 20-5271 (D.C. Cir. Feb. 24, 2022) (Jackson, K., concurring).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* At 3-4.