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United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Committee Members:

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) writes to urge you to confirm Kristen Clarke (Clarke) to be the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). NCADV is the nation's oldest national grassroots domestic violence organization, representing domestic violence programs and survivors directly. Established in 1978, our mission is to lead, mobilize, and raise our voices to support efforts that demand a change of conditions that lead to domestic violence such as patriarchy, privilege, racism, sexism, and classism. We are dedicated to supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable and supporting advocates.

Domestic violence impacts every person in America. With one in four women and one in ten men experiencing intimate partner violence,¹ everyone is acquainted with someone who has experienced violence – whether they know it or not. Black and Native women experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence,² and the systems that ought to protect them are often actively hostile. White supremacy is a feature of all these systems.

In an interview with ABC news, Clarke said, "I want to ensure that the doors of justice remain open (so) all the people can feel that they are seen and heard, especially when we are talking about the most vulnerable among us. I am very hopeful that we will see the Justice Department truly be an engine of reform when it comes to enforcement of our nation's federal civil rights laws."³ Survivors of intimate partner violence, particularly Black and Native women and immigrant women, are among the most vulnerable people in society. Clarke's professional history amply demonstrates her commitment to ensuring survivors have access to justice.

As an attorney with DOJ's Civil Rights Division, Clarke dealt with cases related to systemic racism such as police misconduct and hate crimes. The racism and misogyny built into the criminal and civil justice systems create barriers for those survivors who want to engage with the such systems. Clarke's demonstrated success in addressing issues related to systemic barriers to justice indicate that she will be the champion survivors need.

¹ Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M. & Chen, J. (2018). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief - updated release*. Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>.

² Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 state report*. Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>.

³ Harper, H. (2021, January 26). *DOJ nominee Kristen Clarke wants to make the promise of 'justice for all' a reality: She could be the first Black woman to lead the DOJ's Civil Rights Division*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/doj-nominee-kristen-clarke-make-promise-justice-reality/story?id=75476613>

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In their interactions with institutions and systems, survivors are disbelieved, disrespected, disparaged, and dismissed. Systems that should protect them victimize them instead. They are discriminated against in housing, in employment, in the child welfare system, in education, and in many other formal and informal systems. In some cases, they experience discrimination due to their status as survivors; in other cases, the discrimination they face is unrelated to their status as a survivor but exacerbates the impacts of violence. For example, intimate partner violence is the leading cause of homelessness among women.⁴ Discrimination in housing increases barriers to a survivor being able to leave an abusive relationship. The same can be said for other forms of discrimination that impact a survivor's financial status – lack of resources are a primary factor in keeping survivors trapped in abusive relationships. Whether the discrimination is based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other factors, it compounds the effects of domestic violence, and it keeps survivors trapped in abusive relationships and hamper their recovery.

Kristin Clarke's documented expertise in promoting civil rights and holding those who violate it accountable clearly demonstrates her qualifications for the position of Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. Her personal commitment to equal justice for all means she will be a champion for equal justice for all survivors.

Respectfully,

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition (2013). America's affordable housing shortage, and how to end it. *Housing Spotlight*, 3(2).