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April 21, 2021

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

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

Re: Letter of Support for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Nominee, Kristen Clarke

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) and the Black Women's Roundtable (BWR), I write to express the unequivocal support of NCBCP and BWR for the nomination of Kristen Clarke to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the United States Department of Justice. Founded in 1976, the NCBCP is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to increasing civic engagement and voter participation in Black the community. The NCBCP has a national membership of organizations representing a diverse constituency base including leaders in such areas as civil rights, labor, business, fraternities and sororities; women's rights, youth advocacy, education, the faith community, public policy, research, and others. The BWR, serves as the NCBCP's intergenerational leadership development, mentoring, empowerment and power building arm for Black women and girls. The BWR is at the forefront of championing just and equitable public policies that center racial, economic and gender justice to promote health and wellness, economic security and prosperity, education, and global empowerment as key elements of success for Black women and girls.

Since its inception in 1957, the charge of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has been to "uphold the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of our society."¹ As our nation faces a reckoning with racism and hate that tears at the fabric of communities across our country, the selection of the next leader of the

¹ The United States Department of Justice, *About the Division*, available at <https://www.justice.gov/crt>

Civil Rights Division will play a critical role in moving our nation toward fully realizing the fundamental tenet of the U.S. Constitution, “equal justice under law”.

Kristen Clarke is exactly the leader this country needs at the helm of the Civil Rights Division during this volatile time in our nation. As this country continues to be plagued with police violence that endangers the lives of Black people, racially motivated domestic terrorism, and attacks on our democracy that have produced hundreds of state-sponsored pre- and post-election voter suppression laws, Ms. Clarke’s extensive record of civil rights advocacy and enforcement, coupled with her deep commitment to justice and professional integrity makes her uniquely qualified to combat these attacks on our nation’s civil rights and democracy.

Ms. Clarke has established a distinguished record of advancing and protecting the civil rights of marginalized communities. She has dedicated her career to the enforcement and expansion of civil rights.

It was civil rights that first motivated Ms. Clarke to become a lawyer when, as a high school student from an immigrant family who lived in public housing in Brooklyn, New York, she attended a hearing in the school desegregation lawsuit, *Sheff v. O’Neill*. After graduating from Harvard University and Columbia Law School, Ms. Clarke began her career as a civil rights attorney in the prestigious Honors Program of the Civil Rights Division. During her six years as an attorney at the Civil Rights Division, she served in both the Criminal Section and Voting Section, where she handled critical matters ranging from police misconduct, hate crimes and human trafficking to voting rights and redistricting.

After serving at the Civil Right Division, Ms. Clarke joined the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she worked on litigation focused on voting rights and election law. As Co-Director of the Political Participation Group at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Ms. Clarke litigated some of the organization’s most important voting rights cases, including arguing on behalf of Black voters in the lower court hearing of *Shelby County v. Holder*², where she defended the constitutionality of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

Ms. Clarke went on to serve as chief of the Civil Rights Bureau in the New York Attorney General’s Office. In her role as New York’s civil rights enforcement officer, she directed one of the most active and robust civil rights dockets in the country. She supervised a broad range of civil rights enforcement activity, which included voting rights, fair housing and lending, equal opportunity in education, anti-discrimination in the workplace, access for individuals with disabilities, religious rights, LGBTQ rights, and hate crimes. She also worked to address barriers to reentry for individuals with criminal convictions, the school-to-prison pipeline, police misconduct, and overseeing preparation of a comprehensive report on the New York City Police Department’s Stop and Frisk Program.

Ms. Clarke served as president and executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights (Lawyers Committee), one of the country’s premier civil rights organizations. In that capacity, she has protected democracy by defending the voting rights of citizens across the nation as the leader of the Lawyers’ Committee’s national Election Protection Program³, the

² *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, 679 F.3d 848 (2012)

³ Election Protection Program, available at <https://lawyerscommittee.org/project/election-protection/>

nation's largest and longest-running nonpartisan voter protection program. Ms. Clarke also launched the James Byrd, Jr. Center to Stop Hate,⁴ a national project focused on combating and responding to hate crimes against marginalized communities by strengthening the capacity of community leaders, law enforcement, and national organizations to combat hate. She led efforts to ban hate speech on social media platforms and won a lawsuit against *The Daily Stormer*⁵, a white supremacist website and shut down numerous others. Under her leadership, the Lawyers' Committee filed suit against the Proud Boys for attacking a historic Black church in Washington, D.C.⁶

Throughout her career, Ms. Clarke has fought against hatred and bigotry. Her breadth and depth of civil rights advocacy is unparalleled; and her reputation as a trusted and respected civil rights advocate, across ideological and partisan boundaries is above reproach⁷.

Black women have always been at the forefront of this nation's civil rights movement. Ms. Clarke is an addition to the long list of incredibly qualified and passionate Black women civil rights leaders who have served with distinction and commitment to fighting hate and bias and promoting civil rights and racial justice. During this critical moment in our nation's history, it is paramount that the Civil Rights Division be led by Ms. Clarke, a woman who is uniquely qualified to restore the Civil Rights Division to its mission of upholding the civil rights of all Americans.

I have no doubt that Ms. Clarke will bring the same high level of integrity, commitment, and sound judgment to leading the Civil Rights Division as she has demonstrated throughout her 20-year career as an advocate for justice and civil rights. On behalf of the NCBCP and BWR, I urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to confirm Kristen Clarke as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights without delay.

Sincerely,



Melanie L. Campbell
President, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
Convenor, Black Women's Roundtable

Cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

⁴ The James Byrd, Jr. Center to Stop Hate, available at <https://lawyerscommittee.org/project/stop-hate-project/>

⁵ Stanley Augustin, National Civil Rights Organization Wins Lawsuit Against Daily Stormer and White Supremacists Engaging in Online Threats and Harassment, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (Aug. 9, 2019), available at <https://lawyerscommittee.org/national-civil-rights-organization-wins-lawsuit-against-daily-stormer-and-white-supremacists-engaging-in-online-threats-and-harassment/>.

⁶ Jordan Pascal, Church, *Civil Rights Group Suing Proud Boys Over Theft, Vandalism of BLM Signs*, National Public Radio, (January 5, 2021), available at <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/01/05/953574644/church-civil-rights-group-suing-proud-boys-over-theft-vandalism-of-b-l-m-signs>

⁷ Spectrum News Staff & Associated Press, Police Groups Endorse Kristen Clarke, Biden's Pick for Civil Rights Chief, Spectrum News New York 1, (March 11, 2021) <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2021/03/11/police-groups-endorse-kristen-clarke-civil-rights>.