

April 25, 2022

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

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

As religious leaders from around the country, we write to support the confirmation of Nancy Abudu to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Ms. Abudu is well qualified to serve on the court and will bring with her both deep experience in litigation, including with respect to religious liberty, and a deep understanding of the Constitution and laws she will take an oath to uphold. She will be the first Black woman judge ever on the Eleventh Circuit, which includes the deep South states of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.

Ms. Abudu's professional experiences have prepared her well for the role of judge. Ms. Abudu's early career included positions as an associate at a large law firm and as a staff attorney at the Eleventh Circuit, where she experienced first-hand the distinct roles of the judges for whom she worked and the advocates who appeared before them. In 2005, Ms. Abudu made a choice to devote her education and experience to advocating for the protection of voting and other constitutional rights guaranteed to all Americans. Her work, first with the American Civil Liberties Union and later with the Southern Poverty Law Center, focused on providing legal representation to those least able to represent themselves.

She has worked directly on several cases defending religious liberty. She filed suit on behalf of Derick Isaac Brown and other Muslim individuals who were detained in Miami-Dade County but deniedⁱ their rights to free exercise of religion when deprived of a Halal diet. The case was ultimately settled, and the prison provided Halal food and accommodations for the observance of Ramadan. She also represented Benjamin Newmark, a Hasidic Jew who contended he was subjected to religious discriminationⁱⁱ during his employment at a sheriff's office. The alleged misconduct included demoting him and subjecting him to harassment, such as scheduling him to work on the Sabbath and trying to pressure him into eating pork.

Ms. Abudu's intellect, legal acumen, sound judgment, passion for justice, and integrity – qualities she will bring to the Court – have led to a remarkable career. In addition to being a gifted litigator, Ms. Abudu has become a leading and respected voice on civil and human rights. She is a Harvard Law School Wasserstein Fellow, has served as an international election observer in Albania, and is a member of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Election Law as well as the ABA's Working Group on Building Trust in the American Justice System. She has received numerous commendations,ⁱⁱⁱ including the Outstanding Pro Bono Representation Award from the New York Legal Aid Society, the Pillar of the Community Award from the Rugby Hills Neighborhood Association, and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from Representative Hank Johnson.

Throughout the years, Ms. Abudu has devoted her considerable energy and talents to upholding the rights of those for whom she has advocated – including veterans and others with disabilities, people of faith seeking religious accommodations and protection from discrimination, people experiencing homelessness, and people seeking to exercise the right to vote. She has done so

zealously, as an ethical lawyer's oath requires, and with excellence and integrity. If confirmed, we are confident that Ms. Abudu will uphold her oath as a judge with equal dedication by applying the Constitution and laws of our country in a fair, open-minded and impartial manner.

We urge you to support Nancy Abudu's speedy confirmation.

Sincerely,^{iv}

Rabbi David Saperstein
Former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for
Religious Freedom

Rev. J. Brent Walker
Executive Director Emeritus
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Rev. Timothy McDonald
Pastor
First Iconium Baptist Church
Atlanta, GA

Rev. Leslie Watson Wilson
National Director
African American Religious Affairs
People For the American Way

Rev. Jennifer Butler
CEO
Faith in Public Life

Sabrina E. Dent, DMin
President
Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation
Richmond, VA

Rev. Adam Gray
Senior Pastor
Riverside Baptist Church
Jacksonville, FL

Pastor R.L. Gundy
Florida State Director
African American Ministers in Action
Jacksonville, FL

Rev. Dr. Raymond Johnson
President, Florida Council of Churches
Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
of Florida
Lakeland, FL

Rabbi Joshua Lesser
Emeritus Rabbi
Congregation Bet Haverim
Atlanta, GA

Rev. Barry W Lynn
Former Legislative Counsel
Office for Church in Society
United Church of Christ

Rev. Isaac McCullough
African American Ministers Leadership
Council, Jacksonville, Fla

Rev. Dr. Russell L. Meyer
Executive Director
Florida Council of Churches
Tampa, FL

Rev. Dr. Kenneth J. Meyers
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church
Jacksonville, FL

Rev. J. Phillip Miller-Evans
Senior Pastor
Circle of Faith
St. Petersburg, FL

Rabbi Jack Moline
Rabbi Emeritus
Agudas Achim Congregation
Alexandria, VA

Rabbi David Sandmel
Portland, ME

Rabbi Merrill Shapiro
President
St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society
St. Augustine, FL

Maggie Siddiqi
Certified Muslim Chaplain
Senior Director of Religion and Faith
Center for American Progress

Rev. Tammy Snyder
Associate Pastor
Bayshore Baptist Church
Tampa, FL

Rev. Dr. Scott Stearman
Interim Senior Pastor
Bayshore Baptist Church
Tampa, FL

ⁱ <https://www.afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Nancy-G.-Abudu.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aclufl.org/en/cases/newmark-v-collier-co-sheriffs-office>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Nancy-G.-Abudu.pdf>

^{iv} Signers have joined in their individual capacities. Churches and other institutional affiliations are included for identification purposes only.