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Supporting the South Asian legal community with a trusted forum for professional growth and development while promoting civil rights and access to justice for the South Asian community

July 16, 2021

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

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

**Re: Endorsement of Sarala V. Nagala as United States District Judge  
for the District of Connecticut**

Dear Honorable Richard J. Durbin and Honorable Charles E. Grassley:

The South Asian Bar Association of North America (“SABA North America”), the umbrella organization for 29 local chapters across the United States and Canada, writes in enthusiastic support of the historic nomination of Sarala V. Nagala to serve as a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. If confirmed, Ms. Nagala will be the first person of South Asian descent to be appointed to the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut.

SABA North America represents the rapidly growing South Asian legal community across North America. The organization promotes the professional growth and advancement of attorneys of South Asian descent and strives to protect the rights and liberties of the South Asian community. In light of its mission and vision, SABA North America recognizes a critical need for greater participation by South Asian-Americans in the federal judiciary. Through the appointment of Ms. Nagala as well as other highly qualified South Asians to federal courts nationwide, significant progress towards fulfilling that need can be achieved.

Ms. Nagala’s first-generation upbringing, impressive academic and professional credentials, dedication to public service, and unwavering commitment to protect the most vulnerable members of her community exceptionally qualify her for the position of United States District Court Judge. Not only will Ms. Nagala bring critical diversity of experiences and background to the federal bench, she will undoubtedly serve with a strong sense of fairness, compassion, and humility.

Like many other members of the South Asian legal community in the United States, Ms. Nagala is a first-generation American. Her parents emigrated from India to rural North Dakota in the late 1970s to pursue medical residencies. The Nagalas eventually settled in Oakes, a town of only 1800 people, where they served the community by providing critical medical care. Through their example, the Nagalas necessarily sowed the seeds for Ms. Nagala’s dedication to public service. The Nagalas were the only minority family in their town for a long time. As such, Ms.



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Nagala grew up knowing that she was different from the largely homogenous population around her. This unique upbringing provided Ms. Nagala with an appreciation for diversity that will translate into much needed compassion for the diverse population who will come before her in the Courtroom.

Ms. Nagala has accumulated a number of academic credentials that have set her up for her future in public service. Given the limited opportunities available in North Dakota, Ms. Nagala went far west to attend Stanford University, where she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Public Policy with distinction. Ms. Nagala then attended University of California, Berkeley School of Law, where she was a Member of the *California Law Review* and was a Symposium Editor of the *Berkeley Technology Law Journal*. Ms. Nagala graduated from Berkeley in 2008 as a member of Order of the Coif.

Ms. Nagala's storied professional credentials ensure that she will be true asset to the bench. For example, after graduating law school, she clerked with the Honorable Susan P. Graber of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. It was during this clerkship that Ms. Nagala first learned that judges should be thoughtful, deliberate, and most importantly fair. Ms. Nagala has followed these same principles throughout her legal career.

Following the clerkship, Ms. Nagala joined Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, a San Francisco law firm. During her short tenure at the law firm, Ms. Nagala worked on a number of federal and state trial court complex commercial litigation matters. She also had the unique opportunity to work with ACLU lawyers on a pro bono challenge of the City of Orange Police Department's and Orange County District Attorney's practice of filing for "gang injunctions," which precluded alleged gang members from conducting everyday activities. After trial, the federal district court judge found in favor of Ms. Nagala's clients, finding that their due process rights were violated. This earned Ms. Nagala ACLU's prestigious Courageous Advocacy Award. In this case among others, Ms. Nagala gained critical skills she needed to pursue her future in public service.

In 2012, Ms. Nagala was appointed as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut. During her nine-year tenure as a federal prosecutor, Ms. Nagala has managed numerous investigations and prosecutions for violations of federal criminal laws pertaining to human trafficking, hate crimes, child exploitation, fraud, and identity theft. Ms. Nagala has also tried five cases to guilty verdict including a number of high-profile sex trafficking and hate crime cases. Notably, she was involved in the prosecution of Ted Hakey who fired shots from a high-powered rifle through the Baitul Aman Mosque in Connecticut in November 2015. Remarkably, Mr. Hakey apologized to leaders of the Mosque for what amounted to ignorance and ultimately pled guilty to a civil rights felony. Ms. Nagala was also involved in a significant sex trafficking case in 2018 involving a victim who did not



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view herself as one. Ms. Nagala recognized the level of courage that was required for this victim to come forward and effectively presented evidence in support of the case.

Ms. Nagala's work goes far beyond investigations and prosecutions. She has also taken it upon herself to educate her community. Ms. Nagala has trained hundreds of law enforcement officials about the victim-centered approach to human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. She has organized "Protecting Your House of Worship" trainings for synagogues, mosques, and gurudwaras. Ms. Nagala has also organized training sessions at police departments about cultural competency, with a focus on educating officers on hate crimes laws and facets of Islam and Sikhism. Ms. Nagala has also been instrumental in bringing anti-bullying programs to minority school children. Through prosecution and these initiatives, Ms. Nagala has become a well-known champion of the most vulnerable members of her community, namely victims of child sex trafficking and hate crimes. Ms. Nagala's compassion and humility will be invaluable for those she will see on the bench.

Ms. Nagala's appointment will be profoundly meaningful to the growing South Asian legal community across North America. Her experiences and background mirror many of those in our community. There is no question that her exceptional credentials, long-standing dedication to public service, and unwavering commitment to vulnerable populations ensure that she will serve with fairness, compassion and humility.

For all of these reasons, SABA North America proudly and enthusiastically supports Ms. Nagala for appointment to the federal judiciary in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Samir Mehta, President

Tara M. Raghavan, President-Elect