



February 22, 2021

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

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

Ujima, Inc. is a national Culturally Specific Services Issue Resource Center funded by the Administration of Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services by and through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. We are also a technical assistance provider to HBCU grantees of the Campus Technical Assistance and Resource Project funded by the Office on Violence Against Women within the U.S. Department of Justice by and through the Violence Against Women Act. The name Ujima was derived from one of the Kwanzaa principles which means Collective Work and Responsibility. This principle is critical to addressing violence against Black women in the United States. Ujima Inc. through its education and outreach; training and technical assistance; resource development; research; and public policy efforts mobilizes the Black community and allies to strengthen our families, recognizing that the safety and viability of our families is connected to the health and well-being of our individual neighborhoods and communities at large. We are part of a network of domestic violence programs that work collaboratively to promote practices and strategies to improve our nation's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, and community violence.

Survivors of intimate partner violence seek help from a multitude of systems for safety and healing, however those same systems can cause harm and are often difficult to navigate. Black women are almost 3x as likely to be killed by an intimate partner than white women – we are particularly concerned this statistic will increase as we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and bias in legal and social welfare systems. We believe Judge Garland is uniquely qualified to lead the U.S. Department of Justice during this unprecedented time. His unwavering commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring the rights of all citizens will usher in a new era of equity throughout the Department of Justice. For centuries, Black communities have endured disparate treatment from an innately carceral legal system, and the plight of Black women has been constantly silenced and overlooked. Ujima Inc. works tirelessly to reverse this trajectory. We welcome the opportunity to provide an intuitive cultural perspective and inform new initiatives dedicated to addressing the plight of Black women and legal responses and remedies under Judge Garland's leadership.

We fully support the confirmation of Judge Merrick Garland as Attorney General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Respectfully,

Karma Cottman
Executive Director