

July 27, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Senators Durbin and Grassley:

I am writing on behalf of the Vera Institute of Justice, a 60-year-old national organization dedicated to ending the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty, to express strong support for Amy Solomon's nomination to serve as the U.S. Department of Justice's Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and to urge swift confirmation in the Senate.

The United States incarcerates nearly two million people on any given day—more than any other country in the world. OJP is tasked with providing leadership and support in order to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and strengthen the criminal and juvenile justice systems. OJP achieves these goals by awarding financial support to stakeholders, providing training and technical assistance, as well as conducting research, data collection and analysis. It is crucial that the candidate selected for this position is committed to promoting just solutions that advance true public safety.

Amy Solomon is uniquely well qualified to lead this important work. She is an experienced public servant with a rich history of working on corrections reform, reentry and public safety. She has long promoted best practices for reducing recidivism, improving community reentry and building trust between the justice system and communities of color. Amy used her position as Vice President of Criminal Justice at Arnold Ventures to expand economic opportunities for people with criminal records and reduce reliance on prisons, initiatives that align with Vera's mission and work.

Ms. Solomon is a national expert, especially in the area of reentry and providing meaningful opportunities and resources for system-impacted people. This was a focus of her work at the Urban Institute earlier in her career and then as a Senior Advisor in the very office that she now leads. During her tenure at OJP during the Obama Administration, Ms. Solomon was the first Executive Director of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, where she spearheaded the development of consequential policies like the federal Ban the Box rule and the Second Chance

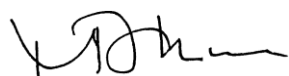
Pell Initiative. The Ban the Box rule prohibits certain federal employers and contractors from requiring a job applicant to disclose his or her criminal background on a job application or during an interview prior to a conditional job offer being extended. This change continues to open up job, education, and housing opportunities for those formerly incarcerated.

The Second Chance Pell Initiative is a program administered by the U.S. Department of Education that provides need-based Pell Grants for postsecondary education to people in state and federal prisons. The program has been so successful that the Department of Education expanded the initiative in 2020. The program now has 130 participating colleges from 42 states, the District of Columbia and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Our data shows that this program has increased public safety, lowered recidivism and saved taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Solomon has already made a significant impact as the head of OJP during the Biden Administration. OJP is one of the key federal components responsible for implementing the Executive Branch's public safety and criminal justice agenda. Ms. Solomon's leadership has resulted in more grant funding dedicated toward community violence intervention strategies, the availability of advanced training and technical assistance on comprehensive approaches to addressing violence, and a deep examination of how OJP's activities and mission should center system-impacted people. The latter is exemplified by the expansion of the Second Chance Fellows program as well as the appointment of Eddie Bocanegra, a system-impacted expert on justice and safety issues, as a Senior Policy Advisor on Ms. Solomon's staff.

The Vera Institute has had the privilege to work with Ms. Solomon for many years and has every confidence she is the right person to lead OJP. The Vera Institute strongly supports Amy Solomon's nomination and urge her swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nick Turner