



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

1825 K Street, NW · Suite 411 · Washington, DC 20006 · 202.223.2532 · Fax 202.223.2538 · www.chn.org

April 4, 2022

Dear Senator:

The Coalition on Human Needs strongly supports the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to serve as Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and urges you to vote to confirm her nomination.

We are an [alliance of national organizations](#) that come together to advocate on behalf of people with low incomes and other vulnerable people. Judge Jackson's experience, as a public defender, vice-chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission, and as a U.S. trial court and appeals court judge, provide evidence that she will, consistent with the Constitution and U.S. law, protect the rights of all people, including those who cannot afford an expensive legal defense.

As vice-chair, Judge Jackson participated in the Sentencing Commission's decision to apply retroactively the law Congress enacted to reduce the unwarranted disparities in sentencing for crack versus powder cocaine. These disparities are some of the most egregious examples of racially discriminatory criminal justice policies. Her [statement](#) after the vote to apply the sentencing guidelines retroactively reveals her steadfast commitment to equity:

"And today there is no federal sentencing provision that is more closely identified with unwarranted disparity and perceived systemic unfairness than the 100:1 crack/powder penalty distinction...

"The Commission has the statutory authority to permit retroactive guideline penalty reductions, and presumably Congress provided that authority to be used if ever the day should come when the retroactive application of a guideline penalty reduction furthers our societal interests in equitable sentencing and the avoidance of unwarranted disparity. This is that day...

"For the past 25 years, the 100:1 crack/powder disparity has cast a long and persistent shadow. It has spawned clouds of controversy and an aura of unfairness that has shrouded nearly every federal crack cocaine sentence that was handed down pursuant to that law...

"I believe that the Commission has no choice but to make this right. Our failure to do so would harm not only those serving sentences pursuant to the prior guideline penalty, but all who believe in equal application of the laws and the fundamental fairness of our criminal justice system."

We quote extensively from Judge Jackson's statement because it expresses the views that make her so well suited to serve on the Supreme Court. Following the laws enacted by Congress, she joined in exercising the Sentencing Commission's responsibility to ensure that people subjected to past unfair sentencing would not be ignored. She recognized that it is in the national interest to improve "the fundamental fairness of our criminal justice system." Her decision was an important victory for racial

and economic justice. We believe she would continue to decide against unlawful discrimination on the nation's highest court.

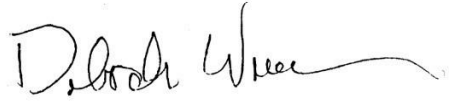
Judge Jackson's career has included decisions upholding the rights of workers, immigrants, LGBTQ youth and families seeking foster care services, and people with disabilities.

- While serving on the District Court, Judge Jackson ruled to protect collective bargaining rights from unlawful acts by the executive branch. In the D.C. Circuit, she ruled that a Federal Labor Relations Board policy change was arbitrary and capricious because it would limit conditions subject to bargaining by federal workers.
- Judge Jackson ruled in support of immigrant rights in several cases. In [Kiakombua v. Wolf](#), Judge Jackson found that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services had changed its "credible fear" criteria in unlawful ways not prescribed by Congress. Judge Jackson vacated the new plan and ordered that previously deported plaintiffs be given new credible fear interviews under lawful policies.
- Judge Jackson blocked an executive branch decision to allow child welfare agencies receiving federal grants to turn away LGBTQ youth and families.
- Judge Jackson supported the rights of people with disabilities in her ruling in favor of William Pierce, a deaf person who was unlawfully denied accommodations while in prison. She also ruled that Uber may be held liable if they fail to provide transportation services accessible to people who use wheelchairs.

All these are important examples of Judge Jackson's commitment to applying the rule of law in support of people who have all too often been harmed by lack of access to a fair hearing in our justice system. It has been frequently noted that her experience as a public defender increased Judge Jackson's awareness of our judicial system's failure even to explain legal proceedings to defendants, much less provide them with adequate representation, all too often. It is also worth noting why Judge Jackson decided to become a public defender after serving as a lawyer with the Sentencing Commission. In responding to [questions by Senator Sasse](#) as part of confirmation proceedings for the D.C. Court of Appeals, Judge Jackson indicated that she was looking for more hands-on experience "in the trenches." "I also viewed working in the office of the Federal Public Defender as an opportunity to help people in need, and to promote core constitutional values, such as the Sixth Amendment principles that the government cannot deprive people who are subject to its authority of their liberty without meeting its burden of proving its criminal charges, and that every person who is accused of criminal conduct by the government, regardless of wealth and despite the nature of the accusations, is entitled to the assistance of counsel."

We believe that Judge Jackson will ably serve the national interest as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Please vote to confirm her historic nomination.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Weinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah Weinstein,
Executive Director