

December 15, 2022

Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators,

We, the undersigned, write to urge you to move forward with confirming the eight highly qualified nominees for positions on the D.C. Superior Court and Court of Appeals who currently await confirmation votes. There are currently 14 judicial vacancies at the D.C. Superior Court and two in the D.C. Court of Appeals; each is short nearly 25% of its judges. This severe understaffing means that District of Columbia courts are struggling to provide just and expedient resolution of legal matters.

In contrast to most judicial positions that require Senate action, the judges of the D.C. courts handle the wide array of everyday matters that are common to state courts of general jurisdiction, like child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, adoption and custody, probate, landlord-tenant, small claims, consumer, commercial and many other issues. The D.C. courts also adjudicate all juvenile criminal charges and adult prosecutions for violations of the District's Criminal Code. Timely resolution of these court matters is important to the daily lives of thousands of D.C. residents and businesses.

D.C. is home to almost 690,000 people – more than some states. Over 24,000 D.C. residents are veterans. Almost 57% are Black or Hispanic. Additionally, the District has over 23,700 employers across a variety of industries, which also rely on our courts. As in neighboring states, these are individuals with families, jobs, homes, and issues that sometimes require adjudication by our courts to resolve. However, unlike neighboring states, the District has to depend on Senate approval to fill judicial vacancies.

D.C. Superior Court has the highest number of case filings per capita among the nation's trial courts. **Superior Court judges traditionally have 200 or fewer cases on their docket, but now have 300 to 400.** Amid this shortage, the active criminal caseload grew by 79% between January 2020 and June 2021, and new trials are being set as far out as February 2024. Caseloads for civil matters are even higher. Justice delayed is indeed justice denied.

Similarly, judges in the D.C. Court of Appeals are experiencing increased caseloads as long-standing vacancies remain unfilled. **More than 200 cases are delayed on the calendar per year because only a limited number of three-judge appellate panels can be assembled.**

For the reasons outlined above, we respectfully ask that you make every effort to ensure full Senate action before the end of the current Congress on the confirmation of the eight currently pending judicial nominees. Residents of the District of Columbia expect and deserve a justice system that operates in a timely, fair, and just manner.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Signed via electronic form by the following:

Organizations

ACLU of the District of Columbia
Bread for the City
Community Family Life Services
Council for Court Excellence
CURE-DC
DC Affordable Law Firm
D.C. Tenants' Rights Center
DC Volunteer Lawyers Project
Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services
Forster Law Firm
Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop
Interfaith Action for Human Rights
Justice Policy Institute
Legal Aid DC
More Than Our Crimes
Neighbors for Justice
Network for Victim Recovery of DC
One by 1, Inc.
Open City Advocates
ReThink Justice, Pathways to Reentry
Rising for Justice
Scrofano Law PC
The Law Office of Deborah M. Golden
Tzedek DC
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Individuals

Casey Anderson
Michele Berry
Garrett Bradford
Professor John Brittain

Shelley Broderick
Ashley Brookshier
Danielle Burs
Rachael Burs
Jon Cooper
Janie Crocco
Katharine Cusick
Gene Downing
Simon Evans
Taylor Evans
Sara Falk
Polly Finn
Susan Brooke Finn
Jeffrey Gutman
Elinor Hart
Ann Keep
Anya Kreider
Anna Marston
Lauren Mosakowski
Sara Mosenkis
Melissa Phido
Dana Rubin
Alyssa Saunders
Alexandra Smith
Vanita "Saleema" Snow
Marina Streznewski
Jennifer Ubiera
Elena Vanko
Simon Wentzell
Rita Wollmering
Misty Thomas Zaleski
Brian Zaleski
Joanne Zimolzak