

September 24, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: NOMINATION OF RACHAEL ROLLINS TO US ATTORNEY-DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

My name is Leon Smith, and I am the Executive Director at Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ), the only independent, statewide nonprofit organization working exclusively to improve the juvenile justice and other youth serving systems in Massachusetts. CfJJ's mission is to advocate statewide systemic reform that achieves equitable youth justice. Our work extends beyond the boundaries of juvenile justice to address pathways and pipelines that lead young people, directly or indirectly, into formal system involvement. It is my pleasure to write this letter to express strong support for the nomination of Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins for the position of United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts.

I have personally known DA Rollins for over 20 years and believe that she is an extraordinary candidate. She is known and respected in Suffolk County, and beyond, for her strong voice in support of justice and equity. Her boldness has been on display since her election, as she vacated wrongful convictions tainted by crime lab corruption and adopted an approach to cases driven by poverty, mental illness, and substance use that prioritized treatment and diversion over incarceration. By moving away from the prosecution of a number of low-level offenses, she was able to find alternatives to prosecution to help those in need of services, or who simply needed second chances, while directing prosecutorial resources to focus on serious offenders that were an actual threat to public safety. Her approach has been effective in improving individual outcomes for many citizens of Suffolk County, while maintaining overall safety and quality of life.

She also is a woman of vision and is not afraid to support policy that reimagines the system in a way that is more effective in achieving better safety outcomes and greater equity. This was

clearly evident when she stood in solidarity with us to public support, and testify in support of, legislation to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction in Massachusetts to include 18–20-year-olds. Seeing that population of young adults have the highest rate of recidivism in the entire Massachusetts criminal justice system, as well as one of the worst rates of racial and ethnic disparities in incarceration in America, she did not double down on the status quo. She stood courageously in support of change that would better enable this population of young adults to grow into responsible adults. This is the type of courage needed in a United States Attorney.

Rachel Rollins campaigned on the idea that she would fight for a criminal justice system that works equally for everyone. I believe that she has kept that promise, operating with transparency, working collaboratively and in partnership with advocacy organizations, law enforcement, social service providers, local officials, and the legislature to fulfill the purpose and mission of her office. She also prioritized better data collection, demographic information, to ensure more equitable practices within her office.

In conclusion, DA Rollins, the first woman ever elected as District Attorney in Suffolk County and the first woman of color ever elected District Attorney in Massachusetts, has embraced brave and unprecedented initiatives in pursuit of a just and equitable approach to her office. Citizens for Juvenile Justice has been honored and proud to collaborate with her office in pursuit of the best interests of youth and young adults in the Commonwealth. We fully support President Biden's nomination of District Attorney Rollins as the Commonwealth's top federal prosecutor and believe that her track record and dedication to data-driven prosecutorial decision making will allow her to be successful in the position of United States Attorney.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Leon Smith
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