

STATEMENT OF FEDERAL PUBLIC & COMMUNITY DEFENDERS ON THE NOMINATION OF JUDGE KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Federal Public and Community Defenders applaud the historic nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to serve as the next Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Judge Jackson is an exceptionally well-qualified nominee whose appointment will advance our country towards a fairer and more equitable system. Of the 115 justices who have served on the Supreme Court, she will not only be the first Black woman, but also the first to bring experience as a public defender.

Federal Public and Community Defenders represent the overwhelming majority of those charged with crimes in federal court. It is our privilege to fight each day to protect the rights of people who cannot afford a lawyer. With the highest rate of incarceration in the world, our nation's deeply flawed criminal legal system harms all Americans—and impacts communities of color the hardest. As defenders, we bear witness to the struggles of each of the unique individuals we represent, and to the fact that rehabilitation and redemption are real, and even common.

Our work provides us a perspective on the criminal legal system distinct from other actors that should be well represented on the federal bench, including on our nation's highest court. But for too long, we have not been given the opportunity to bring that expertise to bear as jurists or policymakers. We are grateful that, during President Biden's first year in office, he has worked to correct this imbalance by nominating a record number of individuals with backgrounds in public and criminal defense to federal judgeships.

With his first nomination to the Supreme Court, President Biden has broken yet another barrier for public defenders, and for Black women. This nomination affirms the importance of elevating lawyers who have represented the poor and the powerless to roles where they can improve the administration of justice.