



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the Alliance for Justice (AFJ), a national association representing more than 130 public interest and civil rights organizations, I write to strongly support the confirmation of Arianna J. Freeman to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Ms. Freeman would bring an important perspective to the bench based on her work representing some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society. As a federal public defender specializing in habeas cases in Pennsylvania, she has distinguished herself as an expert, leading and advising on precedent-setting matters in a highly complex and writing-intensive area of the law. She is deeply committed to the rule of law and not only ensuring that our democracy works for all, but that it is applied equally to all.

After graduating from Yale Law School, she began her distinguished career as a clerk for Judge C. Darnell Jones II, Judge Harvey Slomsky, and Judge James T. Giles on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Next, she joined the Federal Community Defender Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, where she has worked since 2009. Starting in the Office's Capital Habeas Unit as a Research and Writing Specialist, Ms. Freeman represented more than fifteen death-sentenced individuals in their post-conviction litigation. She then transitioned to the Non-Capital Habeas Unit, first as an Assistant Federal Defender and then as Managing Attorney. In her current role, Ms. Freeman has coordinated the Office's litigation of more than 500 post-conviction matters.

During her more than thirteen years at the Federal Community Defender Office, Ms. Freeman has represented hundreds of indigent clients at both the trial and appellate level, ensuring their constitutional and statutory rights are protected throughout the criminal process. She has litigated more than 100 post-conviction matters to judgment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and frequently appears as counsel of record in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Additionally, Ms. Freeman has filed briefs in more than fifteen appeals and presented oral arguments seven times — including once to the Third Circuit sitting *en banc*. She is eminently qualified to be a federal judge. As one commentator noted, she has [more circuit-appeals experience](#) than the nine judges President Obama and President Trump appointed to the Third Circuit combined.

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Outside of the courtroom, Ms. Freeman is an involved member of her community, serving on the boards of First Person Arts and the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. She has devoted significant time to training the next generation of public interest attorneys, including co-convening the Drexel Summer Theory Institute and teaching a course on death penalty law at Drexel University School of Law.

In addition to the professional experience Ms. Freeman would bring to the bench, it is notable that if confirmed she would be the first Black woman and first woman of color to ever serve on the Third Circuit, and only the third active woman on the fourteen-person court. The Third Circuit, which includes Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, is home to more than six million people of color, yet there have only been seven people of color judges in the court's history, none of whom were Black women. Our courts and their jurists should be reflective of both the diversity and excellence of our nation. Ms. Freeman is a testament to both.

Given her exemplary qualifications, described in greater detail in our [linked report](#), the Senate should swiftly confirm Ms. Freeman to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rakim Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice