



321 S. Plymouth Court, Suite 600, Chicago, Illinois 60604 | P: 312.554.2088 | F: 312.962.4345 | www.bwla.org

April 23, 2021

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in Support of Candace Jackson-Akiwumi – Nominee for United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the Black Women Lawyers' Association of Greater Chicago, Inc. (BWLA), we write to convey our enthusiastic and unequivocal support for the nomination of longtime BWLA member, Candace Jackson-Akiwumi, to the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Through our work alongside Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi, we have witnessed her sterling intellect, sincere warmth, even temperament, and high integrity – qualities that make her an exceptional nominee for the federal appellate court.

Since its inception in 1987, BWLA has continuously worked to identify and address issues unique to Black women lawyers and judges, promote excellence in the legal profession, encourage the inclusion of Black women lawyers in the administration of justice in the legal system, provide professional development and resources, and further career opportunities and relationships to support Black women in the legal profession in Chicago. BWLA is comprised of thousands of members nationwide and has an opulent history of illustrious and influential members in the legal profession, including the first judge of color on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, BWLA Co-Founder Ret. Judge Ann Claire Williams, as well as many other highly accomplished federal and state court judges and attorneys, international business leaders, corporate and non-profit general counsels, government leaders, partners and associates at law firms, professors in academia, and law students. Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi is a shining example of this rich legacy of Black women attorneys and has greatly contributed to the profession through stellar legal representation as a federal public defender and her tireless efforts to advance BWLA's mission during her time in Chicago.

In 2005, Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi came to Chicago to serve as a Judicial Law Clerk for the Honorable David H. Coar at the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. She also immediately joined BWLA, becoming a dedicated member of our organization, volunteering her time and energy to support the mission of BWLA. She held multiple leadership positions within the organization, most notably as a

member of the Board of Directors and Scholarship Fund Board for several years. Additionally, she was instrumental to the development of new and innovative programming to advance BWLA's mission while serving as a mentor to law students and serving the community at large. Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi's outreach and service included leading efforts to provide meals and clothes to women and children shelters, coaching law students for mock trial competitions, developing a pipeline program to promote and increase Black woman lawyer representation at large law firms, and providing guidance to high school and grade school students that aspire to become lawyers, among other notable contributions.

Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi's superlative legal career speaks for itself and so does her unwavering personal dedication to BWLA's mission to serve and uplift the community and develop a pipeline of future legal professionals. Her exemplary vision, responsible stewardship, and compassion for her community are just a few attributes she would bring to the federal bench. Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi will serve our country with her wisdom and her warmth. BWLA strongly supports Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi's nomination to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and urges her swift confirmation by the United States Senate.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.*

Sincerely,

Kenyatta S. Beverly
President, BWLA
Labor and Employment Counsel
The Davey Tree Expert Company

Nakhia C. Crossley
Vice President, BWLA
Central Region Director & Counsel
Solar Energy Industries Association

Judge Ann Claire Williams (Ret.)
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
Founder, BWLA

Sharon E. Jones
Chief Executive Officer
Jones Diversity Inc.
Founder & Past President, BWLA

Ambassador Ertharin Cousin
Distinguished Fellow
Chicago Council on Global Affairs
Founder & Past President, BWLA

Dorothy G. Capers
Executive Vice President and Group General
Counsel
National Express Group PLC
Past President, BWLA

Patricia Brown Holmes
Managing Partner
Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP
Founder & Past President, BWLA

Hon. Robin D. Shoffner, Ret.
Partner
Nathan & Kamionski, LLP
Past President, BWLA

Zaldwaynaka Scott
Attorney
Past President, BWLA

***Please note that the signatory organization affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. The positions expressed in this letter are those of the individual signatories only and not those of their affiliated organizations.**

Kenya A. Jenkins-Wright
General Counsel
Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy
Commission
Past President, BWLA

Natalie Howse
Attorney
Past President, Cook County Bar Association

Alice V. Brathwaite
Counsel – Employment & Litigation
Upwork

Natasha E. Jenkins
General Counsel
Teamsters Local 700
Vice President, Cook County Bar Association

Camile Lindsay
Chief of Staff
Illinois Department of Corrections

Erica Kirkwood
Vice President and General Counsel
GMA Construction Group
Past President, BWLA

Ngozi C. Okorafor
Director of Employment Actions
Cook County Sheriff's Office
Past President, BWLA

Ashley S.A. Jackson, Esq.
Privacy Counsel & Officer
Olive AL, Inc.

Hon. Sybil C. Thomas
State of Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County
Past President, BWLA

Ava George Stewart
Chief, Misdemeanor/Traffic Division
Lake County State's Attorney's Office

Precious Jacobs-Perry
Equity Partner
Jenner & Block LLP

Tiffany Renee Harper
Lead, Strategy & Operations
Twitter
Past President, BWLA

Brenda Russell
Director & Client Relations Executive
PricewaterhouseCoopers

Elsa Andrianifahanana
Associate
Jones Day

Gray Mateo-Harris
Equity Partner
Fox Rothschild, LLP

Carrera Thibodeaux
Energy and Water Regulation and Litigation
Associate
Whitt-Sturtevant LLP

Lora M. Whitticker
Manager of Alumni Relations & In-House
Opportunities
Jenner & Block LLP

Brianna Panton
Law Student
Loyola University Chicago School of Law

Mercedes M. Hill
Associate General Counsel
Beam Suntory