

March 18, 2024

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Nomination of Sparkle L. Sooknanan to the United States District
Court for the District of Columbia**

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham:

We write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Sparkle L. Sooknanan to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

We are attorneys who have served in the U.S. Department of Justice and have had the privilege of working with Ms. Sooknanan at one or more stages of her career. Our own roles at the Department of Justice varied and spanned multiple presidential administrations. Some of us have held leadership positions in the Department. Most of us have served as career attorneys. All of us understand and appreciate the importance of jurists who are thoughtful, fair, and committed to the rule of law. Although we differ on issues, we agree on this: Ms. Sooknanan is exceptionally well qualified to serve on the federal bench. We have observed firsthand her tremendous intellect, striking humility, and tireless work ethic.

Ms. Sooknanan first joined the Department of Justice as a career attorney on the Civil Division's Appellate Staff when she was hired through the Attorney General's Honors Program. In that role, she handled appeals across the country. From the start, Ms. Sooknanan excelled at identifying and analyzing complex legal issues. Her arguments were thoroughly researched; her writing was lucid and persuasive. She quickly established herself as a mainstay of the office—capable of tackling the most challenging assignments on short notice and willing to lend her extraordinary skills and energies wherever they were needed. Ms. Sooknanan's success came as no surprise to those of us who had been involved in her hiring: The judges for whom she had clerked—Judge Eric Vitaliano (E.D.N.Y.) and Judge Guido Calabresi (Second

Circuit)—had provided glowing recommendations, praising her as a standout law clerk destined to achieve great things in the law.

Given Ms. Sooknanan’s remarkable abilities and exemplary work, it also came as no surprise when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor selected her as a law clerk. While the Appellate Staff celebrated this career development for Ms. Sooknanan, we regretted the loss of our brilliant and generous colleague.

Following her clerkship, Ms. Sooknanan practiced law at a global firm, Jones Day. While building a diverse trial and appellate practice, the public good was never far from Ms. Sooknanan’s mind. She devoted more than 3,000 hours to *pro bono* matters, earning her a spot on the District of Columbia Courts’ Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll with High Honors each year.

Ms. Sooknanan returned to the Department of Justice in 2021 as a Deputy Associate Attorney General and later was named the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. In these roles, she has worked closely with other Department officials in leadership offices, as well as career staff. And, as before, Ms. Sooknanan’s sharp mind, steady presence, and sound judgment have been assets to the Department. She seeks and considers input from all those with relevant information and expertise, communicates her views in clear and compelling terms, and engages in constructive and respectful dialogues where disagreements arise.

As Deputy Associate Attorney General, Ms. Sooknanan established herself as a trusted counsel, involved in the management of significant civil and criminal litigation from both the Civil Rights and Civil Divisions. In her current role, Ms. Sooknanan manages a vast civil and criminal litigation docket, requiring her to quickly assimilate enormous amounts of new information and distill it into key legal insights. Her success in these roles makes clear that she can handle tremendous workloads—a testament to her mental acuity, stamina, and passion for public service.

We have all been fortunate to work with many talented attorneys in our years at the Department of Justice, but Ms. Sooknanan stands apart. She possesses a truly unique combination of discernment, intelligence, curiosity, kindness, and commitment to justice for all. She treats all those she encounters with dignity and compassion. As a judge, we know that she will apply the law with fair-minded impartiality and respect for the parties before her, no matter who they are.

Without reservation, we urge the Committee to recommend, and the Senate to confirm, Ms. Sooknanan’s appointment. She will be a superb addition to the federal judiciary.

Sincerely,¹

Michael Abate

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¹ The opinions expressed in this letter are those of the signatories and not to be attributed to the U.S. Department of Justice or any other entities affiliated with those named. References to present or former positions are for identification purposes only.

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