



March 16, 2021

United State Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Members of the Committee:

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) writes in support of the confirmation of Vanita Gupta to serve as Associate Attorney General.

NCLR is a national public interest law firm that litigates precedent-setting cases at the trial and appellate court levels, advocates for equitable public policies affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, provides free legal assistance to LGBTQ people and their advocates, and conducts community education on LGBTQ issues. NCLR has been advancing the civil and human rights of LGBTQ people and their families across the United States through litigation, legislation, policy, and public education since its founding in 1977. As a civil rights organization, we understand the critical role of the Department of Justice, and the need for strong leadership at the agency's highest levels. Ms. Gupta embodies the kind of leadership that we need at this time.

Ms. Gupta's career and her many accomplishments make her well-suited for the role for which she has been nominated. In addition to serving in the Justice Department, she has worked in several of our nation's most preeminent civil rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

Throughout her distinguished career, Ms. Gupta has championed critically important civil rights issues, including racial justice, law enforcement misconduct, and voter suppression. She has also been a stalwart defender of LGBTQ people, who are of course deeply affected by all of these issues and must also contend with invidious discrimination just because of who we are and whom we love. When in 2016 she led the Justice Department's litigation against North Carolina's heinous legislation targeting transgender people, it was not only her actions but her words that spoke volumes. While she worked in court to challenge the discriminatory law that North Carolina had put in place (H.B. 2), she also spoke directly to the transgender community the law targeted: "Let me reassure every transgender individual, right here in America, that you belong just as you are. You are supported. And you are protected. ... H.B. 2 violates the law. But H.B. 2 also threatens the values that define us as a people. These values are timeless. These values say to all people that you can be who you are, and you deserve to

live with dignity.”¹ Her words demonstrate a deep understanding of the role of our civil rights laws and the Department of Justice itself – to vindicate the rights of all people to live and thrive, free from discrimination, and to convey to all that their government sees and values them.

In addition to her experience and qualifications, the historic nature of her nomination should be noted. If confirmed, Ms. Gupta would be the first civil rights lawyer to serve in the 44-year history of the position of associate attorney general. She would, in fact, be the first civil rights lawyer to hold one of the three top leadership positions at the Justice Department.

We urge the committee to advance and the entire Senate to swiftly confirm Vanita Gupta to the position of Associate Attorney General.

If you require additional information, please contact Julie Gonen, NCLR’s federal policy director, at jgonen@nclrights.org or 202-734-3547.

Sincerely,

National Center for Lesbian Rights

¹ “Head of the Civil Rights Division Vanita Gupta Delivers Remarks at Press Conference Announcing Complaint Against the State of North Carolina to Stop Discrimination Against Transgender Individuals,” Monday, May 9, 2016, available at [Head of the Civil Rights Division Vanita Gupta Delivers Remarks at Press Conference Announcing Complaint Against the State of North Carolina to Stop Discrimination Against Transgender Individuals | OPA | Department of Justice](#).