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The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC

February 14, 2022

Re: Nomination of Nina Morrison to be United States District Judge

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

I provide this letter in enthusiastic support for the nomination of Nina Morrison's appointment as a Judge of the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

My recommendation is based, not only upon my experiences with Ms. Morrison, but upon my long career as an attorney – one that encompasses more than 40 years. The first nine years of my career, I worked in the court system of New York State as a clerk for several Judges of the State's Supreme Court, including six years as the confidential law clerk for the Honorable Michael A. Corriero, now retired, but currently starring in the television show *Hot Bench*. Thereafter, I worked as a prosecutor for the next 30 years in the Office of the Queens County District Attorney. I rose through the ranks, from working as a Trial Assistant to a Bureau Chief and then as an Executive, and ultimately served as Counsel to the long-term District Attorney, the Honorable Richard A. Brown, until his death in 2019. During my tenure as a prosecutor, I not only tried many murder cases, including the killing of on and off-duty members of the NYPD, but also the last capital murder case tried in New York – *People v. John Taylor* – the infamous mastermind of the Wendy's Massacre. Additionally, I also worked on significant appeals seeking to expand the application of New York law to benefit law enforcement and the admissibility of prosecutorial evidence and argument. For the last few years of my career, I served as the Legislative Representative for the District Attorneys' Association of New York (DAASNY), lobbying representatives of both houses of the State Legislature, as well as the Governor's Counsel.

In sum, my career has been devoted to advancing the interests of public safety, law enforcement and criminal prosecution, not only in individual cases, but in the formulation of public policy.

That I so enthusiastically support Nina's nomination should be quite telling. Although she and I have spent our respective careers in pursuit of justice from opposite sides of the courtroom, and I surely do not profile as someone to provide such strong support, I do so out of the enormous respect that I have for her. That regard for her is based not merely upon working with Nina on matters, but also upon my getting to know her – personally – and recognizing her fairness, her sensitivity, her commitment to seeing the right thing done for people – regardless of how long ago they may have entered the criminal justice system, or how much time and effort will be required to find the truth.

I had occasion to witness all these personal and professional traits of character during our mutual handling of the case of Felipe Rodriguez, over a three-year period, culminating on December 30, 2019 -- the penultimate day of my tenure in Queens County. Mr. Rodriguez had been convicted of the brutal, 1987 Thanksgiving Eve murder of a young mother, whose body was disposed of in a desolate Queens railroad yard. Mr. Rodriguez was convicted of the murder in 1990, despite his resolute denials of guilt, and he was sentenced to life in prison. A model prisoner, his possibility of parole was practically foreclosed by his inability to acknowledge responsibility and express the attendant remorse. Nina persuaded me that our Office should not oppose the commutation of Mr. Rodriguez' sentence by then Governor Cuomo. Provided the insight of a careful review of Rodriguez' stellar institutional record, Nina convinced me of the fairness of her request. I was more impressed that spared continued incarceration, Nina's commitment to her client could have easily concluded. Yet, she persuasively argued that the case should be reinvestigated. Over the next several years – patiently, passionately, doggedly – Nina advocated for continued review of ancient records and the search for long lost witnesses in hopes of finding proof that would reveal Mr. Rodriguez' actual innocence. Although, I was never able to make that judgment, evidence of a crucial *Brady* violation from the early stages of the murder investigation was revealed and as a result, Mr. Rodriguez' conviction was set aside, and he is now spared the burden of being labelled as a murderer. That any of those things happened is attributable to one person – Nina Morrison. Had she not cared so much, I likely would not have cared as much. Had she not worked so hard on Mr. Rodriguez' behalf, I might not have. Had she not challenged me to consider other possibilities regarding the evidence, I am not sure that I would have devoted the scarce time that I had remaining in my tenure to conclude the matter.

Apart from her legal skill, acumen and powers of persuasion, I came to know Nina and hold her in the highest personal regard. Circumstances dictated that when we spoke, it was frequently late at night, or on weekends, when we were each scrambling to attend to matters for family and the commitments of real life. Her genuineness is apparent, her kindness, sincere in all ways. It is because of these experiences that this hardened, career prosecutor has concluded that Nina is not only a wonderful lawyer, but she is an even better person. She will prove to be a credit to the federal judiciary – just as she has long been a credit to our profession.

It is based upon all of this and more that I recommend Nina Morrison for confirmation as a Federal District Court Judge. Should you have any inquiry, never hesitate in contacting me. My cell number is [REDACTED].

Very truly yours,



Robert J. Masters, Esq.

cc. Senator John Cornyn

Senator Ted Cruz