



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

June 21, 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 Judge Elizabeth Hanes to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Judge Hanes has consistently demonstrated a commitment to equal justice and protecting civil and constitutional liberties as a public defender, consumer protection civil litigator, and judge. Additionally, with more than two years of experience as a federal magistrate judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, Judge Hanes is highly qualified to join the District Court.

Judge Hanes excelled at every stage of her rich and varied career. After graduating from Richmond Law School *summa cum laude*, she clerked for Judge Joseph R. Goodwin in the Southern District of West Virginia and for Judge Robert B. King in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Following her clerkships, Judge Hanes reaffirmed her commitment to justice by joining the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Eastern District of Virginia as an Assistant Federal Public Defender. Judge Hanes quickly distinguished herself, serving as the lead counsel for highly challenging cases and arguing several appeals.

Outside of the courtroom, Judge Hanes is dedicated to service within the Richmond legal community. She trains the next generation of lawyers by teaching criminal law and trial practice classes and sits on the Criminal Justice Act Committee, which appoints attorneys for indigent clients. She also served on the Board of Directors for the Virginia Law Foundation, where she advocated for access to justice and diversity in the legal profession. Her service has been well-recognized, as she received Women of Achievement Award from the Metropolitan Richmond Women's Bar Association in 2021 and the Frankie Muse Freeman Organizational Pro Bono Award in 2019, among other honors.

Her commitment to service is reflected both in her extracurricular activities and in her professional career path. After seven years at the Federal Public Defender's office, Judge Hanes joined Consumer Litigation Associates as a consumer protection litigator where she worked tirelessly to protect consumer rights. Representing low-income individuals, including veterans and their families whose cases related to predatory lending practices,

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she successfully obtained financial compensation for her clients and oversaw negotiations regarding monetary settlements. While working as a civil litigator, Judge Hanes continued handling criminal law cases as a pro bono attorney to the Federal Public Defender's office, including filing an *amicus* brief in a case before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge Hanes was [unanimously selected](#) to serve as a United States Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia and was sworn in on June 12, 2020. In this position, her abilities as an effective and efficient arbitrator were on full display. She mediated over 100 criminal and civil cases without having a ruling overturned or affirmed with significant criticism. For example, in [Banks v. City of Fredericksburg](#), Judge Hanes affirmed the ability of individuals to exercise their fundamental rights to peaceably assemble and protest. She conducted a settlement conference between nine protesters and the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia after the plaintiffs alleged that the city's police department violated their First and Fourth Amendment rights by refusing to let them peaceably protest the death of George Floyd. Judge Hanes' representation ensured that Americans can exercise their foundational rights without being unlawfully limited by state actors.

Judge Hanes would bring an important legal perspective to the District Court of the Eastern District of Virginia based on her extensive work representing many of the most vulnerable in our society. Public defenders and consumer protection litigators play a vital role in our justice system by ensuring that the constitutional rights of indigent defendants and everyday consumers are protected, yet they remain severely underrepresented in our judiciary. In addition to the professional diversity she would bring, Judge Hanes would also help the Eastern District of Virginia better reflect the communities it serves: currently, only about one-quarter of the judges in the District are women.

Confirming Judge Hanes to the federal bench helps demonstrate the importance of judges that prioritize fairness and justice for all in their courtrooms. Given her exemplary qualifications and abiding commitment to equal justice for all Americans, the Senate should swiftly confirm Judge Elizabeth Hanes to the United States District Court for Eastern Virginia.

Sincerely,

Rakim H.D. Brooks

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice