



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

September 20, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the Alliance for Justice (AFJ), a national association representing 151 public interest and civil rights organizations, I write to strongly support the confirmation of Justice Maria Araujo Kahn to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Justice Kahn's story is a deeply American one. Born in Benguela, Angola, to Portuguese parents, she immigrated to America with her parents at the age of 10 to escape civil war. Justice Kahn, whose parents were factory workers, had big dreams for her future. Those aspirations led her to attend New York University where she earned her B.A., *cum laude*, and graduate from Fordham Law School with her J.D. in 1989.

Justice Kahn has had a long career dedicated to public service. She began her career as a clerk for Hon. Peter C. Dorsey in the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut. Next, she served as a public defender for the State of Connecticut where she represented juveniles in delinquency cases. This important work in public defense gave her critical insight into the rights of the accused and a deeper understanding of the realities of our criminal justice system. Justice Kahn then broadened her range of advocacy when she moved to the State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, leading civil rights litigation that covered a wide range of disability rights. This included participating in cases that led to the establishment of a statewide interpreter system for the deaf and hard of hearing at Connecticut hospitals and establishing the due process rights of clients in state rehabilitation services.

Justice Kahn's years as an advocate for juveniles in the criminal justice system and for people with disabilities demonstrate her commitment to equal justice under the law. In addition to her experience as a public defender and disability rights advocate, Justice Kahn also has prosecutorial experience in health care fraud, white collar matters, theft of intellectual property, identity theft, computer crimes, tax fraud, and bank fraud. Her varied experiences as a civil rights advocate and prosecutor give her crucial insights into the justice system overall.

These qualities and qualifications are exactly what led Governor M. Jodi Rell, a Republican, to appoint Justice Kahn to the Connecticut Superior Court in 2006. As a trial judge, Justice Kahn presided over thousands of juvenile and criminal cases before she was appointed to the Connecticut Appellate Court and then the Connecticut Supreme Court by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, a Democrat, in 2017. The bipartisan support for these appointments demonstrates that Justice Kahn's strong record and judicial excellence.

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As an Associate Justice, Justice Kahn has authored 62 opinions that demonstrate her capabilities as a fair minded and reason-based adjudicator. Her opinions have clarified federal and state constitutional provisions, both reducing ambiguity and upholding the rights of criminal defendants. Justice Kahn has also served as Co-Chair of the Judicial Branch's Access to Justice Commission and the Limited English Proficiency Committee, showing a commitment to ensure that the courts are accessible and structured to respond to all who may come before it. She has won numerous awards, including the Portuguese Bar Association's Americo Ventura Lifetime Achievement Award and the Portuguese American Leadership Council of the United States' Leadership Award in Public Service, which is demonstrative of her unique role as a judge that takes strides to be inclusive and accountable to the community she serves.

Justice Kahn is both a child of immigrants and an immigrant herself. She understands what it means to be an immigrant in America and has dedicated her professional career to public service. This unique lens, coupled with her judicial experiences, demonstrate why she would be an incredible asset to the Second Circuit. We support her swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

Rakim H.D. Brooks

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice