

December 3, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer,

For the last four years, the Trump Administration has ruthlessly attacked civil and human rights; this relentless assault, which exacerbated centuries of systemic racism, has had devastating consequences on communities of color and religious communities. There is a great deal of work to undo the damage wrought by the Trump Administration and to continue the struggle to form a more perfect union with equal justice for all.

It is imperative that the Democratic leader of the Senate Judiciary Committee have a proven track record of leadership on civil and human rights so that the Committee can hit the ground running in 2021. We strongly believe Senator Durbin is the right person for this critical role.

Senator Durbin served as the founding Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee, as well as Chairman of the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Subcommittee. In this capacity, Senator Durbin has worked for years to combat hate crimes and white supremacist violence. He held the first-ever hearing on the civil rights of American Muslims in 2011, and in 2012, following the massacre at the Sikh Gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, Senator Durbin held a hearing on the threat of far-right violent extremism. He is an original cosponsor of the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act and the lead sponsor of the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, which passed the House of Representatives earlier this year.

Senator Durbin has also helped lead the effort to challenge voter suppression efforts. He is one of the lead sponsors of the House-passed John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and held multiple hearings in the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Subcommittee on voter suppression, including field hearings in Florida and Ohio.

An original cosponsor of the Justice in Policing Act, Senator Durbin is a longtime advocate for addressing police abuses. As Chairman of the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Subcommittee, Senator Durbin held several hearings on race and policing in America. He is a longtime original cosponsor of the End Racial and Religious Profiling Act, held the most recent Senate hearing on racial profiling in America, and has led the effort to close loopholes in the Department of Justice's racial profiling guidance. Senator Durbin also held hearings to receive

testimony from victims of law enforcement abuses and gun violence, including Sybrina Fulton, the mother of Trayvon Martin, and Lucy McBath, the mother of Jordan Davis (who is now Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA)).

Senator Durbin has led efforts to reform our broken immigration system and challenge the Trump Administration's cruel anti-immigrant policies. He is lead sponsor of the bipartisan Dream Act, which he first introduced 20 years ago to give young immigrants who grew up in this country a path to citizenship. In April 2010, he was the first member of Congress to call for the Obama Administration to stop deporting Dreamers, and he successfully pressed the Administration to establish the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Senator Durbin was one of eight Republicans and Democrats who authored comprehensive immigration reform legislation that passed the Senate in 2013.

Senator Durbin has led the effort to address inequities in our criminal justice system. He was the lead Democratic sponsor of the First Step Act of 2018 and he also authored the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, the first law to reduce federal drug sentences since the beginning of the war on drugs. Senator Durbin is also the lead sponsor of legislation to end the federal death penalty and to stem the overuse of solitary confinement. He held hearings that led the Obama Administration to reform and reduce BOP's use of restricted housing in 2016.

For the past four years, Senator Durbin has helped lead the opposition to efforts to fill the federal bench with underqualified candidates with anti-civil rights views. He is also a longtime advocate for increasing the transparency of federal courts. Senator Durbin is the lead sponsor of the bipartisan Cameras in the Courtroom Act, which would require the Supreme Court to permit television coverage of open sessions of the Court.

Senator Durbin has also stood up for the rights of LGBTQ Americans, pressing nominees on their views on marriage equality and LGBTQ rights. He is an original cosponsor of the Equality Act, which would make explicit protections for LGBTQ individuals in federal civil rights laws, and the Do No Harm Act, which would amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to ensure that the statute could no longer be used to discriminate and threaten fundamental civil rights.

Senator Durbin was the lead Democratic sponsor of the McCain Torture Amendment prohibiting cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and the SAFE Act, which was the basis for key privacy and civil liberties reforms to the USA PATRIOT Act. He has authored several laws to hold accountable the perpetrators of serious human rights abuses, including the Genocide Accountability Act, the Trafficking in Persons Accountability Act, the Child Soldiers Accountability Act, the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, and the Human Rights Enforcement Act.

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In sum, we believe Senator Durbin's track record of defending civil and human rights demonstrates that he is the right person to lead the Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee at this crucial moment in our history.

Respectfully submitted,

Muslim Advocates

NAACP

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Arab American Institute (AAI)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Emgage Action

Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE)

Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

Sikh Coalition

United We Dream