

June 2, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &
Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &
Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Jocelyn Samuels to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned 60 civil rights, workers' rights, and gender equality organizations write to express their strong support for the nomination of Jocelyn Samuels to serve as a Commissioner on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Ms. Samuels is a highly regarded and well-qualified civil rights lawyer, and her confirmation will ensure that EEOC has a full complement of Commissioners to allow it to address workplace discrimination expeditiously and efficiently during this moment of national crisis and beyond.

The EEOC enforces employment antidiscrimination laws in the private workforce and federal sector, including Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act), the Equal Pay Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. Laws interpreted and enforced by the EEOC are critical to workplace fairness and opportunity for women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and people with disabilities across the country. The EEOC plays a critical part in preventing, investigating, and remedying such discrimination, and requires strong and dedicated leadership, which is particularly important during this period of severe economic turmoil.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposes and exacerbates existing inequities and economic insecurities that increase risk of discrimination and harassment at work. The pandemic and its economic repercussions are disproportionately impacting women, people of color, older individuals, those with disabilities, and other historically marginalized communities—many of whom make up a disproportionate share of the essential workforce and must repeatedly put their lives at risk during this time. And without a safety net, working people are more desperate to keep a paycheck at any cost and less willing to report discrimination and harassment, increasing the risk of coercion and abuse by employers. Moreover, stay at home orders and widespread closures, combined with illness, economic insecurity, and loss of internet access create substantial barriers to the ability of working people to learn about and enforce their rights in a timely manner. The work of the EEOC is more important than ever; so too are the individuals who will shape and lead its efforts to protect working people from the current and long-term workplace impacts of COVID-19.

Ms. Samuels is exceptionally qualified for the position to which she has been nominated. She has dedicated her career to public service, advocacy and research, and her record demonstrates extensive and relevant experience with civil rights law and enforcement, including having worked for several years as a senior attorney-advisor at EEOC itself. Ms. Samuels also has substantial experience developing

relationships and working with stakeholders, including many of the communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and with legal issues relevant to addressing the economic and workplace impacts of the pandemic, including gender and racial equality, disability discrimination, and health care.

After leaving EEOC, Ms. Samuels served as the Vice President for Education & Employment at the National Women’s Law Center for eight years. During that time, she directed efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace and in education, including litigation and legislative and policy advocacy to promote enforcement of Title VII and Title IX, and the campaign leading to the enactment of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. She also represented the plaintiff high school basketball coach in *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Ed.*, 544 U.S. 167 (2005), in which the Supreme Court established a private right of action for retaliation under Title IX.

Ms. Samuels subsequently began a lengthy period of leadership at federal civil rights agencies, serving in various senior positions and as acting Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) from 2009 to 2014. At DOJ, she oversaw work across a range of civil rights issues, including voting rights, systemic reform of police departments, prosecution of hate crimes, and enforcement of protections for individuals with disabilities and LGBTQ people. Thereafter, Ms. Samuels served as the Director of the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From 2014 to 2017 she oversaw policy development, stakeholder engagement, and civil rights enforcement with respect to the health care sector.

In her current capacity as the Executive Director of the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, Ms. Samuels oversees an institution dedicated to independent, interdisciplinary research and public policy addressing LGBTQ issues and gender equality. Under her leadership the Williams Institute has continued to play a leading role in producing data on discrimination against LGBTQ people, including in employment.

Ms. Samuels’ legal expertise, breadth and depth of civil rights experience, and commitment to equality and the rule of law make her exceptionally qualified to serve as a Commissioner. Consequently, we offer our strong support of Jocelyn Samuels to be a Commissioner of the EEOC and urge you to expeditiously approve her nomination so that she may begin the important work that awaits her. For any questions please contact Maya Raghu, Director of Workplace Equality and Senior Counsel at the National Women’s Law Center at mraghu@nwlc.org or Gaylynn Burroughs, Senior Policy Counsel at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights at burroughs@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

National Women’s Law Center
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
A Better Balance
AFL-CIO
African American Ministers In Action
American Association of University Women
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
AnitaB.org
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Center for Advancement of Public Policy
Center for American Progress
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Equal Pay Today
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality Federation
Family Equality
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority Foundation
Futures Without Violence
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Women's Policy Research
KWH Law Center for Social Justice and Change
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Legal Aid at Work
Legal Voice
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable
Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative
MomsRising
Movement Advancement Project
NAACP
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Immigration Law Center
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Workrights Institute
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
PHILLY CLUW
Public Advocacy for Kids (,PAK)
Public Citizen
SAGE
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
The Trevor Project
TIME'S UP
United State of Women

Women's Law Project
YWCA Tri-County Area
YWCA USA