



May 16, 2016

Confirm Paula Xinis to the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to support the confirmation of Paula Xinis to the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to enforcing the rule of law with objectivity, thoughtfulness, and impartiality.

The Leadership Conference believes Paula Xinis' career as a civil rights attorney and public defender has proven her well qualified and her confirmation will mean greater professional diversity of experience on the court. When recommending her nomination, Senator Cardin stated, "She [Paula Xinis] has an appreciation for the rule of law, a respect for the separation of branches of government, and firm roots in Maryland's law community. In my years in the United States Senate, I have never been more confident in a nominee's ability to uphold the solemn responsibilities of judgeship on the federal bench... Paula Xinis understands the important role she could play in strengthening our society and I thank her for her willingness to serve."¹

Ms. Xinis' background includes joining the law firm of Murphy, Falcon & Murphy in Baltimore in 2011, where she practices both civil and criminal litigation. Xinis also served as the Director of Training for the Federal Public Defender's office in Maryland from 2006 to 2011, and as an Assistant Federal Public Defender from 1998 to 2011. From 1997 to 1998, Xinis clerked for Judge Diana Gribbon Motz of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. She received her J.D. in 1997 from Yale Law School and her B.A. with highest distinction in 1991 from the University of Virginia.²

Professional diversity in the judiciary is important, yet public defenders and civil rights attorneys are vastly underrepresented among federal judges. Only 14 percent of President Obama's judicial nominees have been public defenders, while about 41 percent have been prosecutors. In addition, only 3.2 percent of nominees have worked as civil rights lawyers,

¹ "Mikulski, Cardin Introduce U.S. District Court for District of Maryland Nominee Paula Xinis at Senate Judicial Hearing." July 22, 2015. <https://www.mikulski.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/mikulski-cardin-introduce-us-district-court-for-district-of-maryland-nominee-paula-xinis-at-senate-judicial-hearing>

² The White House, "President Obama Nominates Two to Serve on the United States District Courts." Mar 26, 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/26/president-obama-nominates-two-serve-united-states-district-courts>

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while 72 percent have been corporate attorneys.³ This means the majority of federal courts are composed of judges who have only represented the most powerful in society. Ms. Xinis' experience defending defendants who cannot afford counsel brings much needed judicial professional diversity to the federal court system.

The seat that Ms. Xinis would fill has been vacant for 588 days. She was nominated to fill this vacancy in March 2015 and her nomination was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, by a voice vote, in September 2015, and has been pending on the Senate floor ever since. If confirmed, she would fill one of 29 judicial emergencies nationwide. The delay of Ms Xinis' confirmation is emblematic of the unprecedented obstruction of judicial nominees in the 114th Congress. Such inaction on nominees slows the process of justice for those seeking to vindicate their legal and constitutional rights.

President Obama nominated, and Maryland senators support, the confirmation of this well qualified nominee. We strongly urge you to confirm Paula Xinis to the United States District Court for the District of Maryland. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Nancy Zirkin at zirkin@civilrights.org or (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

³ Alliance for Justice, "Broadening the Bench: Professional Diversity and Judicial Nominations." Mar 18, 2016. <http://www.afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Professional-Diversity-Report.pdf>