

August 3, 2021



**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF JIA COBB TO THE
U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 220 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Jia Cobb to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Ms. Cobb's impressive experience and demonstrated commitment to civil rights make her well qualified to serve as a federal judge. For nearly 10 years, she has worked as an attorney at Relman Colfax PLLC, a national plaintiff-side civil rights firm, where she is now a partner. At Relman, she has a robust civil and human rights practice and has litigated cases on issues including fair housing, police misconduct, disability rights, and employment discrimination. Previously, Ms. Cobb spent six years at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, helping to ensure that the rights of people accused of crimes are protected. She has practiced in federal and state courts on both civil and criminal proceedings. Ms. Cobb has also taught trial advocacy at Harvard Law School and American University Washington College of Law. After graduating from Northwestern University and Harvard Law School, she clerked for Judge Diane P. Wood of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She has also supported her community by volunteering with All Our Kids, a nonprofit organization that supports young artists. Ms. Cobb's notable career will make her an asset to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Ms. Cobb's background as a civil rights attorney and former public defender demonstrates her commitment to pursuing equal justice. As a public defender, she served as counsel in more than 200 cases, helping clients who could not afford an attorney navigate the complexities of the law and ensuring their access to justice. Public defenders are vastly underrepresented on the federal bench: of nearly 800 currently active federal judges, only 59 are former public defenders.¹

In addition, Ms. Cobb's experience as a civil rights litigator is valuable. For example, she fought for accessible housing for people with disabilities² and challenged a landlord who sexually harassed women tenants.³ Ms. Cobb also successfully challenged race-based discrimination in employment on behalf of African American job applicants and employees.⁴ The judiciary needs to reflect the diversity of the legal profession, including more judges experienced in ensuring that the civil rights of all people are valued, protected, and defended. Ms. Cobb would bring that vital professional experience to the federal bench.

¹ "[Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#)." *Federal Judicial Center*. Accessed July 2021. Search includes all active Article III judges who list "public defender" or "federal defender" as non-volunteer work experience.

² *The Ability Center of Greater Toledo v. Moline Builders, Inc.*, 478 F. Supp 3d 606 (N.D. Ohio 2020).

³ *CNY Fair Housing, Inc. v. Waterbury*, Case No. 5: 17-cv-868 (N.D.N.Y.).

⁴ *Hardin v. Dadlani*, 221 F. Supp. 3d 87 (D.D.C. 2016).

Ms. Cobb's lived experience would also bring important perspectives to the federal judiciary. Black women have been historically excluded from the federal judiciary: less than 2 percent of the 3,800 people who have served as Article III judges have been Black women.⁵ It is crucial that judges share characteristics and experiences with the people impacted by their decisions. The legitimacy of courts and the decisions they make rely on public trust, and this trust and judicial decision-making are both improved by courts that reflect the communities they serve.⁶ A diverse judiciary also helps ensure that rulings reflect a wide variety of viewpoints, especially from perspectives and communities that have historically been marginalized by the judiciary.⁷ Ms. Cobb would bring this meaningful perspective to the federal bench.

We urge the Senate to confirm Jia Cobb to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarenstejn, Senior Director of the Fair Courts Campaign, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
Interim President & CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Interim Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

⁵ ["Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present."](#) *Federal Judicial Center*. Accessed July 2021. Search includes all women judges whose race or ethnicity includes African American.

⁶ Sen, Maya. ["Diversity, Qualifications, and Ideology: How Female and Minority Judges Have Changed, or Not Changed, Over Time."](#) 2017 *Wis. L. Rev.* 367 (2017).

⁷ *Id.*