

September 28, 2022



**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATIONS OF JUDGE MIA PEREZ, JUDGE KAI SCOTT, AND  
KELLEY HODGE TO THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF  
PENNSYLVANIA**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 230 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our support for the confirmations of Judge Mia Perez, Judge Kai Scott, and Kelley Hodge to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

These three nominees have had their own impressive careers and would bring unique professional and lived experiences to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Notably, all have spent significant time working as public defenders. Public defenders play a critical role in representing people who otherwise would not be able to afford counsel, yet this important professional experience is vastly underrepresented on the federal bench. Fewer than 10 percent of all active federal district court judges have experience as a public defender, and only six judges ever to serve on the Eastern District of Pennsylvania have had such experience.<sup>1</sup> Of these, only one has been a woman.<sup>2</sup> The confirmation of these three exceptional nominees would bring much-needed experiential diversity to our federal courts.

In addition, as detailed below, each nominee has shown their dedication to advancing and protecting the rights of all people.

**Judge Mia Perez**

Since 2016, Judge Perez has served as a judge with the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas. Prior to this, she spent time in private practice as a solo practitioner at her own firm, Perez Law LLC, as of counsel with Jalon and Rossman, and as an associate attorney with Friedman Schuman. Judge Perez also spent four years with the Defender Association of Philadelphia as an assistant defender. Additionally, she has worked to train current and future lawyers as an adjunct professor at the Temple University Beasley School of Law and as an instructor with Trial Advocacy Consulting and Training, LLC. A graduate of Tufts University and Temple University Beasley School of Law, Judge Perez's impressive experience will serve the Eastern District of Pennsylvania well.

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<sup>1</sup> [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (Accessed September 2022). Search includes all judges for the U.S. district courts who listed "community defender," "public defender," or "federal defender" as non-volunteer work experience).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

Judge Perez began her legal career representing clients unable to afford an attorney as an assistant defender with the Defender Association of Philadelphia. She continued this work in private practice at Friedman Schuman and when she opened her own law firm focusing on criminal defense matters. As well as representing her firm clients, she was also a member of the Criminal Justice Act Panel, serving as court-appointed counsel for people unable to pay for legal services. Judge Perez has also worked on important policy initiatives. For example, during her time at Friedman Schuman, Judge Perez helped draft and pass a local ordinance for Springfield Township<sup>3</sup> that extended a state law that prohibited discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations to also include protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.<sup>4</sup> When elected to the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas in 2015, she became one of the very few Latino/a judges on the bench.<sup>5</sup> If confirmed, Judge Perez would be the first Asian American judge to ever sit on the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and only the second Latina to ever serve on this court.<sup>6</sup>

### **Judge Kai Scott**

Since 2016, Judge Scott has served as a judge in the Court of Common Pleas Criminal Trial Division. Prior to this, she spent nine years with the Federal Community Defender Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, first as an assistant federal defender and then as chief of the trial unit. For six years, she also served as an assistant defender with the Defender Association of Philadelphia. A graduate of Hampton University and West Virginia University College of Law, she was a law clerk to Judge Donald Poorman at the Bureau of Workers' Compensation for the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Judge Scott's experience as a fair-minded judge and a public defender will be an asset to the federal bench.

Judge Scott has devoted her entire legal career to ensuring people have access to justice, first spending more than 15 years as a public defender and currently as a judge in the criminal division of the Court of Common Pleas. In addition to her judicial duties, Judge Scott is also a supervising judge in the Alternative Felony Disposition program, which is a pretrial diversion program for people who have been charged for the first time with possession of a firearm.<sup>7</sup> She also oversaw the MENTOR program, a court-based reentry program that matches formerly incarcerated people with mentors to provide them with support, such as job training and trauma-informed counseling, and allows those who successfully complete the program to receive a significantly reduced probation period.<sup>8</sup> Judge Scott's demonstrated commitment to public service and respect for the rule of law will make her a great addition to the federal

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<sup>3</sup> Montgomery Media, [Springfield Commissioners Pass Anti-discrimination Ordinance](#), THE SPRINGFIELD SUN (September 15, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> See [Springfield Township Human Relations Ordinance](#), § 47-2(b).

<sup>5</sup> Arturo Varela, [For Mia Roberts Perez, Being Judge Should Not be a Retirement Job](#), AL DÍA NEWS (February 2015).

<sup>6</sup> [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (Accessed September 2022).

<sup>7</sup> First Judicial District Of Pennsylvania, [Alternative Felony Disposition Program and Expedited \("X-Track"\) Pilot Program](#), Philadelphia Court Of Common Pleas (October 6, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> [MENTOR Program Offers Probation Reduction](#), THE PHILADELPHIA REENTRY COALITION (2022).

judiciary. If confirmed, Judge Scott would be only the second active Black woman serving on the district court and just the third in the court's history (along with Ms. Kelley Hodge).<sup>9</sup>

### **Kelley Hodge**

Ms. Hodge is currently a partner at Fox Rothschild LLP and, prior to this, she was of counsel at Elliot Greenleaf, P.C. She held numerous positions with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, including assistant chief of the Juvenile Court Unit, assistant chief and then chief of the Municipal Court Unit, and assistant district attorney. Ms. Hodge then served as the district attorney for the city of Philadelphia from 2017 to 2018. Ms. Hodge also spent six years with the Richmond Public Defender's Office as an assistant public defender and senior assistant public defender. Additionally, she was the Title IX coordinator and executive assistant to the president at the University of Virginia, and the Safe Schools Advocate and acting director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. She has worked to train future lawyers at the University of Virginia School of Law, Drexel School of Law, and the University of Pennsylvania Carey School of Law. A graduate of the University of Virginia and the University of Richmond T.C. Williams School of Law, Ms. Hodge's breadth and depth of experience highly qualify her for this position.

Ms. Hodge has spent a significant part of her career making sure people have access to qualified counsel and rooting out disparities within the criminal-legal system. Ms. Hodge began her career as a public defender with the Richmond Public Defender's Office, representing clients who could not afford an attorney. In 2017, Ms. Hodge was elected as district attorney for the city of Philadelphia, the first Black woman to ever hold that position.<sup>10</sup> During her time as district attorney, she implemented programs to combat bullying in schools,<sup>11</sup> launched a hate crimes hotline and expanded resources to respond to hate crime allegations,<sup>12</sup> and combated voter intimidation.<sup>13</sup> Ms. Hodge has also worked tirelessly to ensure that schools and universities are a safe and inclusive place for all students. She spent four years as the Safe Schools Advocate for the Philadelphia School District, working with state and local agencies, juvenile courts, and numerous community partners to provide resources to students.<sup>14</sup> If confirmed, Ms. Hodge would be only the second active Black woman serving on this district court and just the third in the court's history (along with Judge Kai Scott).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (Accessed September 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Layla Jones, [City's First Black Female District Attorney Sworn Into Office](#), THE PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE (July 26, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Mike DeNardo, [Philly's DA Launching New Program To Combat Bullying In Schools](#), CBS NEWS (October 28, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, [District Attorney's Office Launches Hate Crime Hotline And Strengthens Task Force](#) (November 16, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Press Release, [Attorney General Josh Shapiro Announces Criminal Charges For Interference In Special Election In 197th Legislative District](#), Office of Attorney General Josh Shapiro (October 30, 2017).


<sup>14</sup> Office of Safe Schools Advocate, [About Us](#), Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (2022).

<sup>15</sup> [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (Accessed September 2022).

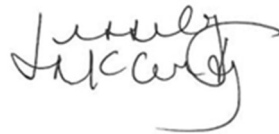


Judge Perez, Judge Scott, and Ms. Hodge are all excellent choices to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and we strongly urge the Senate to confirm their nominations. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarenstejn, senior director of the fair courts program, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Maya Wiley  
President & CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy  
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs