

May 15, 2023

VIA EMAIL

United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Re: *Letter in Support of Julie Rikelman for the U.S Court of Appeals for the First Circuit*

Dear Senator:

We are writing on behalf of the National Women's Law Center, People For the American Way, and the 76 undersigned organizations to express our enthusiastic support for the nomination of Julie Rikelman to be a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Ms. Rikelman has extensive experience as a litigator - representing the interests and concerns of the private sector and public sector, as well as the interests and concerns of ordinary people and the rights they are afforded under our nation's laws. Her impressive career shows her commitment to protecting the rights of all people, regardless of their gender, income, or background, and indicates she will be a tremendous addition to the federal bench.

Julie Rikelman's upbringing deeply influenced her commitment to equal justice for all. Born in Kiev in the Soviet Union, her early years taught her the importance of civil rights. She spent her childhood in one of history's worst totalitarian dictatorships, where every aspect of life and every organization throughout society was controlled by the Communist Party. She was raised in a Jewish family that experienced severe religious persecution. For instance, official anti-Semitism kept her mother from being allowed into medical school.¹ When she was six, her family came to the United States as refugees. Having few possessions, they settled in Brookline, Massachusetts. She learned English and became acculturated, but her childhood in the Soviet Union helped shape her views on liberty. She has explained, "I definitely grew up thinking about how important it was for people to be able to make personal decisions about their lives for themselves and not have the government make those decisions for them."² Her background also taught her the importance of fairness, the hallmark of a distinguished judge.³

Throughout Julie Rikelman's distinguished career in the public and private sector, she has demonstrated a tireless commitment to safeguarding the Constitutional rights of all people. A *magna cum laude* graduate of Harvard College and *cum laude* graduate of Harvard Law School, Ms. Rikelman began her career clerking in federal and state courts, first for Judge Morton Greenberg on the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and then for Justice Dana Fabe, the first woman to serve on the Alaska Supreme Court.⁴ After her clerkships, she served as

¹ "The Fate of *Roe v. Wade* May Rest on This Woman's Shoulders," Time, Oct. 21, 2021, <https://time.com/6108402/julie-rikelman-supreme-court-abortion-rights>.

² *Id.*

³ "Lawyer Defending *Roe* Bets on Precedent to Save Abortion Rights," US Law Week, Nov. 19, 2021, reproduced in Senate Judiciary Committee Questionnaire Attachments, p. 365.

⁴ The White House, "President Biden Names Twenty-Fourth Round of Judicial Nominees," July 29, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/29/president-biden-names-twenty-fourth-round-of-judicial-nominees/>.

a Blackmun Fellow working on a range of cases at the Center for Reproductive Rights. From 2001-2004, during her tenure as an associate at Feldman & Orlansky in Anchorage, Alaska, she handled a variety of criminal and civil cases, working in areas including commercial breach of contract and class actions, state antitrust law, medical malpractice, redistricting litigation, federal environmental criminal law, and various tort claims. For instance, she represented Native-Interest Intervenors who sought to defend the 2000 redistricting boundaries set forth by the Alaska Redistricting Board.⁵ In 2004, she joined Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, primarily representing Chase in complex multiparty litigation arising from the bankruptcy of Commercial Financial Services. She became Vice President of Litigation at NBC Universal in 2006, where she worked on employment discrimination, breach of contract, defamation, and intellectual property issues.

Ms. Rikelman returned to the Center for Reproductive Rights in 2011. Starting as a senior attorney, she quickly became U.S. Litigation Director, a role she has filled for the past decade. She argued cases defending the constitutional right to abortion across the country and presented oral arguments twice before the United States Supreme Court. She successfully argued the first case in *June Medical Services v. Russo*.⁶ She also argued last term's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case.⁷ In that case, in a decision that runs deeply contrary to the Court's and public's longstanding understanding of the Constitution and the protections it affords, five Justices of the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, declaring that there is no federal constitutional right to abortion.⁸ The Court's decision conflicted with nearly 50 years of precedent that Ms. Rikelman relied upon in arguing her case.

Ms. Rikelman's breadth of experience will make her a tremendous asset to the federal bench. Ms. Rikelman's career has shown her the substantial impact that courts have on the lives of people. She understands that court decisions interpreting the law are not simply academic arguments without real-world consequences. Moreover, as reflected during her Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, Ms. Rikelman exudes an even temperament and legal acumen that will serve her well on the federal bench. She answered the Committee's questions clearly, thoroughly, and comprehensively, and displayed her deep knowledge of the law and Constitution. Throughout her hearing, it was clear she is a brilliant litigator with a demonstrated commitment to the equal rights of all people, and if confirmed, would be a tremendous asset to the federal appellate bench.

We respectfully urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Julie Rikelman to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The National Women's Law Center
People for the American Way

⁵ *In re 2001 Redistricting Cases*, 47 P.3d 1089 (Alaska 2002); *In re 2001 Redistricting Cases*, 44 P.3d 141 (Alaska 2002); *In re 2001 Redistricting Cases*, No. 3AN-01-8914 Civ. (Alaska Super. Ct. 2002) (Ridner, J.).

⁶ 591 U.S. 1101 (2020).

⁷ 597 US __ (2022).

⁸ *Id.*; Pew Research, "Majority of Public Disapproves of Supreme Court's Decision to Overturn *Roe v. Wade*," July 6, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/07/06/majority-of-public-disapproves-of-supreme-courts-decision-to-overturn-roe-v-wade/>.

A Woman's Choice of Charlotte
A Woman's Choice of Greensboro
A Woman's Choice of Jacksonville
A Woman's Choice of Raleigh
Advocates for Youth
Alliance for Justice
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American Humanist Association
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Broward for Progress
Care in Action
Catholics for Choice
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Community Change Action
Demand Justice
Earthjustice
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
ERA Coalition
Feminist Majority Foundation
Gender Justice
Girls for Gender Equity
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Impact Fund
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Ipas
KWH Law Center for Social Justice and Change
League of Conservation Voters
Lift Louisiana
Louisiana Coalition for Reproductive Freedom
Muslim Advocates
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women Greater Miami Section
National Council of Jewish Women Minnesota
National Council of Jewish Women Palm Beach
National Council of Jewish Women Valencia Shores Section
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Education Association
National Health Law Program

National Institute for Reproductive Health
National Organization for Women Florida
National Organization for Women Foundation
National Organization for Women Greater Orlando
National Organization for Women Illinois
National Organization for Women Ohio
National Organization for Women Ohio Valley
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Political Caucus
People's Parity Project
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Pro-Choice NC
Progress Florida
Red River Women's Clinic
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
REPRO Rising Virginia
Reproaction
Reproductive Equity Now
Reproductive Health Access Project
SEIU
The Farmworker Association of Florida
The ReSisters of Central Ohio
USOW
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
We Testify
Whole Woman's Health
Whole Woman's Health Alliance
Women Lawyers On Guard Action Network, Inc.
Women's Law Project
Women's March Florida