

OPENING STATEMENT OF KENECHUKWU O. OKOCHA
Nominee to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia
September 7, 2023

Good morning Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Paul, and esteemed Committee members and staff. I am incredibly honored, humbled, and thankful for your consideration of my nomination to be an Associate Judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

I would also like to thank the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission, particularly the Chair, Marie C. Johns, for recommending me to the White House. I thank President Joseph R. Biden for nominating me. I also thank Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring and the judges of the D.C. Superior Court for their assistance and encouragement. I wish to further thank my current and former colleagues at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and especially the current U.S. Attorney Matthew Graves for his leadership, as well as former U.S. Attorneys Ronald Machen and Vincent Cohen for hiring and training me, Jessie Liu for promoting me, and Channing Phillips for his constant guidance. I reserve special thanks for my current and former colleagues in the Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section. Sharon Marcus-Kurn, the Section's chief, has taught me important lessons on leading other attorneys. The Honorable Kelly Higashi, the Section's former chief, and Mark O'Brien, my fellow deputy chief and former supervisor, have shown me how to advocate for victims. And my former colleague Kenya Davis has been a mentor to me throughout my time in the Section. I also thank my lifelong friends and colleagues, many of whom are either here today or watching at home, for their support.

I am the proud son of Nigerian immigrants, Augustine and Aneneosa Okocha, who made the fateful decision to come to the United States for a better life, and to pursue their education. Their hard work and determination culminated in obtaining Ph.Ds in Physical and Counseling Education. They are here today, supporting me like they have always done. I cannot thank them enough for the many sacrifices they made in rearing me, educating me, and advocating for me. Their story and influence are my North Star and instilled in me values of service and betterment of my community, which I hold sacred. Their personal achievements, contributions to their communities, and the successes they nurtured from their children are the quintessential representation of the American Dream. I also thank my three sisters who are also here today. My oldest sister, Nonye has taken care of me and trailblazed a path for me and my other sisters. My immediate older sister, Fy-Fy has long been one of my closest confidants, advisors, and friends. My youngest sister Zia, who I used to watch over, has now grown into a strong confident woman and a peer. All of my sisters have taken on my parents' values in becoming physicians and healing their fellow community members. I thank them for taking time from their families and important work duties to continue to support me today.

I reserve my greatest thanks and appreciation for my partner, my loving and supportive wife, Cheri Okocha. Her strength, beauty, devotion, care, and discipline invigorate me daily. She masterfully balances my needs, along with those of our children, and the demands of her career, working for United States Army Intelligence, in an awe-inspiring way. Falling in love with her was the best thing that happened to me. In large part because our love brought forth my greatest sources of pride and joy: my two children. My oldest who is a rambunctious jovial four-year-old boy, full of energy and--even at his young age--constantly displaying care for his family

members, friends, and people he has just met. And my youngest, a whip smart three-year-old girl, with a commanding presence and confidence.

My family is the foundation upon which I have built my professional career. Faithful to the values my parents instilled in me, I chose a career in the law. For over 15 years, I have pursued justice for my fellow community members as a prosecutor. My career has brought me a wealth of experience; I have tried over 50 cases in three different jurisdictions. Since working for over two years as an Assistant District Attorney in Madison, Wisconsin, I have spent nearly 13 years as an Assistant United States Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. I have spent much of my time in the U.S. Attorney's Office advocating for victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, in turn handling some of the more serious sexual abuse cases in the District of Columbia, and subsequently supervising all of the District's adult, non-fatal felony violent crime domestic violence cases. It is truly an honor and privilege seeking justice for these vulnerable women, children, and men who are victims of these unfortunate crimes.

If confirmed, I would relish the opportunity to continue my commitment to public service, as a neutral arbiter ensuring the protection of rights and faithful administration of the law in the District, an opportunity I view as the pinnacle of service.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.