

Opening Statement of Rahkel Bouchet
Nominee to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you as you consider my nomination to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court. I am deeply grateful, humbled, and honored to appear before you. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Committee members and dedicated Committee staff for considering my nomination.

I would like to thank the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission – particularly its former chair, Judge Emmet Sullivan – for recommending me to the White House, and I am grateful to President Joseph R. Biden, for nominating me for this position. I want to thank Chief Judge Anita Jossey-Herring for her support and leadership.

I am grateful to God for being here and I would like to begin by introducing my family: my mother, Atty. Margo Bouchet, upon whose shoulders I stand, for her guidance, love, and support. As a single mother, she gave me the foundation of faith and taught me to be a woman of integrity, to work hard, and to strive for excellence. I want to acknowledge my maternal grandmother, Alma Pearl Rivero, the matriarch of my family, who passed away in December 2020. I am proud that she witnessed my appointment to the bench as a Magistrate Judge and I know she is here in spirit. I want to acknowledge my children, Dominique Jackson, a third-generation graduate from my alma mater, Howard University, who just completed her first year at Howard University College of Dentistry, and Stephen Jackson, a rising junior at Morehouse College. I was a single mother during their formative years, and they have been my reason for being and my greatest source of joy and pride. I must thank my wonderful husband, Eddie Fontno, for his unwavering support and unconditional love. Thank you for being an amazing husband and father. I also want to acknowledge my bonus daughters, Erinn and Laurynn Fontno, who have lovingly accepted me as a bonus to their lives as well. I hope this moment is a testament to all my children as to what is possible when you walk in faith and refuse to accept limitations for yourself. I want to acknowledge my big brothers, Tony and Terry Williams, my Godparents, Thomas and Mary Leonard, and all of my extended family, who have supported me over the years. I am here today because of the love and support of my family and friends. I must also acknowledge Atty. Gregory Copeland, whose advice and counsel set me on a course that led to this moment.

I must acknowledge former Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, for giving me the opportunity to serve as a Magistrate Judge and former Chief Judge Robert Morin for encouraging me to apply for this position. I want to acknowledge my court family, in particular, my Magistrate Judge colleagues; without them, Superior Court would grind to a halt. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our judicial administrative assistance in Magistrate Judge's chambers, law clerks, and my colleagues on the bench who have mentored and supported me throughout my career.

I was born in Los Angeles, California, and initially moved to the District of Columbia to follow in my mother's footsteps and attend Howard University and Howard University School of Law. In 2007, I returned to the District of Columbia to start my private practice, appearing primarily in the D.C. Superior Court. During my years as a sole practitioner, I represented the District's most

vulnerable families. I also had the honor of Supervising the Child Welfare/Family Justice Clinic at Howard University School of Law, overseeing talented law students and helping to shape them into lawyers. In 2016, I was appointed as a Magistrate Judge with the D.C. Superior Court and I have had the honor of presiding over many of the District's high-volume courtrooms in the Family, Domestic Violence, Civil, and Criminal divisions, with the necessary humility and integrity to ensure the law is upheld and that litigants have a fair and just experience.

I am confident I am well equipped to take on the added responsibility of being an Associate Judge because I bring my diverse experience as a litigator and Magistrate Judge. Thank you for considering my nomination.