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June 10, 2021

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Via Email and U.S. Mail

dc.inc@dc.gov

Tracy Brinkley Nutall, Executive Director
D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission
515 5th Street NW, Suite 235
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Support for The Honorable Vytas V. Vergeer for the Position of
Associate Judge, Superior Court for the District of Columbia

Dear Honorable Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

Washington Council of Lawyers is pleased to express its support for The Honorable Vytas V. Vergeer for the position of Associate Judge on the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Based upon Judge Vergeer's impressive record of dedicated pro bono service and public interest work in addition to his commitment to advocating for the disenfranchised, Washington Council of Lawyers submits this letter of support to the Judicial Nomination Commission to consider Judge Vergeer for appointment to this position.

Washington Council of Lawyers is the public-interest bar association for the District of Columbia. Our membership includes lawyers from all sectors of the legal profession, legal professionals, law students, and others committed to advancing access to justice issues in our community. Washington Council of Lawyers supports strong judicial candidates who have shown a firm commitment to promoting equal access to justice and serving marginalized populations. Judge Vergeer's legal career is consistent with our mission of public and professional service.

Before, during and after law school, Judge Vergeer worked in non-legal positions in five different public defender's offices, including organizations such as the Sentencing Alternatives Program and Families Against Mandatory Minimums, and his legal journey has always bent toward pro bono, public interest, and access to justice for all. Following a judicial clerkship with the Honorable John M. Ferren on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, Judge Vergeer joined Bread for the City as a Staff Attorney, where he litigated public interest cases including public benefits, disability and family consumer cases and negotiated resolutions with housing providers and government agencies on behalf of the organization's clients. From February 1999 until December 2000, Judge Vergeer was promoted and served in the role of Legal Clinic Director for Bread for the City, where he was responsible for all personnel decisions and supervising and coordinating all activities of the organization.

In January 2001, Judge Vergeer served as Director of Government Relations and Staff Attorney for the National Housing Law Project, where he provided support to housing attorneys and advocates on federally assisted public and rental housing issues and lobbied the United States Congress and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to improve laws and regulations for impoverished citizens. During his time at the National Housing Law Project, Judge Vergeer wrote substantive articles for the *Housing Law Bulletin* and wrote five chapters of *HUD Housing Programs: Tenants' Rights*, a comprehensive manual on federally subsidized housing used by hundreds of legal services providers across the United States.

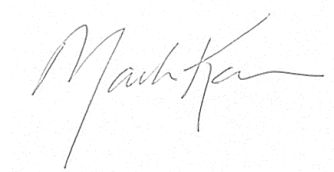
In September 2002, Judge Vergeer returned to his previous role as Legal Clinic Director for Bread for the City, where he managed fifteen staff attorneys and oversaw direct representation, public advocacy, training, budgeting, fundraising and education efforts throughout the D.C. community. He conducted trainings of volunteer and pro bono attorneys and participated in numerous advocacy groups working to improve both the law and the delivery of legal services to underprivileged residents of the District of Columbia. Under his leadership, the organization collaborated with the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program to create a wills clinic, where he drafted wills while visiting residents in the hospital. The organization also assisted with the establishment of the Employment Justice Center, sponsoring its co-founder for an employment law fellowship, under the leadership of Judge Vergeer. He also helped to create the Landlord/Tenant Resource Center and was one of the founders of the Attorney of the Day Project and Housing Conditions Docket.

Since his appointment as an administrative law judge with the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings ("OAH") in August 2014, Judge Vergeer has continued to focus on access to justice issues and has gone above and beyond to ensure that *pro se* litigants and parties with special needs are met with patience, respect, and a listening ear. He serves as the Chair of the Resource Center Committee, working to make OAH more accessible to litigants by simplifying court forms and adding attorneys to the Resource Center to provide more legal guidance to litigants. Under his leadership, the Resource Center has also coordinated with three legal services providers to have fellows work exclusively with OAH in providing as much legal information as possible and representation if deemed necessary. In November 2019, Judge Vergeer was designated the Principal ALJ for Rental Housing and D.C. Public Schools, where he assigns all rental housing and D.C. Public Schools cases to judges in the jurisdiction. He also acts as OAH liaison to outside agencies, assists with developing internal OAH policy, and supervises Attorney Advisors assigned to the D.C. jurisdiction.

In addition to his extraordinary work on and off the bench, Judge Vergeer has served as an adjunct professor at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law. He has volunteered his time, skills, and advocacy to numerous organizations through committee work, including the Washington Council of Lawyers, the Joint Committee of the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program and the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, and D.C. Superior Court's Housing Conditions Docket Special Committee, just to name a few. Most recent as two years ago, he co-organized and hosted Washington Council of Lawyers' Poverty Simulation Training. He was also elected to the D.C. Bar's Board of Governors, where he served for two years until he was appointed as an administrative law judge.

Judge Vergeer's judicial temperament, unique perspective as shaped by his professional experience, and continued commitment to improving the lives of D.C. residents distinguish him as a worthy candidate for the position of Associate Judge on the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Accordingly, Washington Council of Lawyers supports his application to this position and submits that the Honorable Vytas V. Vergeer is exceptionally qualified to serve in this capacity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Kovner", written in a cursive style.

Mark L. Kovner
President, Washington Council of Lawyers