

**Opening Statement of Ray D. McKenzie**  
**Nominee for Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia**

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Paul, and Members of the Committee, let me first begin by expressing my appreciation to God for allowing me the opportunity to be here today appearing before this Committee. Let me also sincerely thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee for convening this hearing and considering my nomination. I thank your staffs for their hard work and dedication as well.

I must express my heartfelt gratitude to the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission; its Chair, the Honorable Marie Johns; its Vice Chair, the venerable Ben Wilson; and its other members for their service to the citizens of the District of Columbia and for recommending me to the White House. I also express my appreciation to the former chairman of the JNC, the Honorable Emmet Sullivan, who encouraged me to apply to serve as an Associate Judge, as well as the Judges on the Superior Court bench who have been sources of encouragement, information, and inspiration throughout this process.

I also must share my profound appreciation and thanks to President Joseph R. Biden for nominating me for this position. It is a great honor to be nominated to the court of general jurisdiction for the city where my wife and I have lived for the last 16 years and where we are raising our family. As a young man growing up on the south side of Richmond, surrounded by poverty and other challenges, but shielded and secured by faith and love, I could not have imagined I would come to these hallowed grounds as a judicial nominee. I am deeply and profoundly honored and humbled.

I have a few of the most important people in my life with me here today. My father, the Rev. Dr. Ray McKenzie, Jr., for whom I am named, is here with me in the flesh. My mother, Ingrid, who passed in 2000, is here with me in spirit. She and my father instilled in me the importance of faith, service, education, and perseverance, which have provided the foundation for the person I am. Also here today is my “bonus mother,” the Rev. Dr. Faith Harris, who has been a loving and restorative partner for my father and a supportive encouragement for me. I likewise am grateful that my siblings are here today. I am grateful for our shared experiences growing up and beyond, and I know my late younger sister, RaChel, is smiling down on us.

I reserve special honor and thanks for my wife, Crystal, and my children, affectionately known as “the Three Es”: Ethan, Ella, and Elliott. Without Crystal’s love, support, and, occasionally, her helpful and constructive lectures, I would not be here today. Words cannot express my gratitude to and love for you. The joys and challenges of rearing our children and the patience they continue to teach me have made me a better man. Relatedly, I am pleased to have Crystal’s mom, Sharon (who I call “Mama Hill”), with me here today. Thank you.

Penultimately, I must express deep and sincere gratitude to my judicial role model and mentor, the Honorable James R. Spencer who hired me as a law clerk out of law school when he was the Chief Judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. Judge Spencer was the consummate trial judge who demonstrated keen preparation, humility, and, above all, fidelity to the law. I will endeavor to demonstrate all these attributes should I be confirmed as an Associate Judge for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

In closing, I must note that the law is a second career for me. I spent my first seven years out of college as a public-school educator. Since deciding to take on a new adventure in the law, I have had the great blessing of serving in a variety of roles that have prepared me to be an Associate Judge on the Superior Court. In addition to serving as a law clerk on one of the busiest federal courts in the country, where I managed a docket of civil and criminal cases, I had the wonderful opportunity to practice as a litigation associate at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, and Flom, a large international law firm where I handled complex issues in the civil, criminal, and administrative contexts. It was a fast-paced, hardworking environment often dealing with cutting-edge areas of the law. Skadden is not only where I cut my teeth as a litigation associate but also the place where I was first introduced to the Superior Court, where, on a pro bono basis, I represented clients seeking relief through the Domestic Violence Intake Center. I subsequently served as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, where I tried cases and led investigations involving violent crimes, narcotics offenses, child exploitation, bribery, and fraud. Following my time as a federal prosecutor, I co-founded a boutique law firm with a dear friend where, among other things, we represented individuals and organizations involved in government investigations. And earlier this year, my law partner and I moved our practice to a larger platform at my current firm, Miles & Stockbridge. I have been blessed beyond measure and am grateful for all the relationships I was able to build with friends and colleagues at these organizations. There are too many to name individually.

The opportunity to now return to public service as an Associate Judge at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia is awe-inspiring. Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.