

Opening Statement of Sean C. Staples
Nominee to be Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for considering my nomination to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. I thank all the members of the Judicial Nomination Commission and specifically its chair, The Honorable Emmet G. Sullivan, for recommending me to the White House and President Joseph Biden for nominating me. I wish to recognize and thank Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring for her leadership and support, our former Chief Judge Robert Morin for his leadership and guidance, former Chief Judge Lee Satterfield who appointed me as a Magistrate Judge in 2013 and the committee staff for their work in preparing for this hearing.

I am pleased to be joined by my members of my family. My wife Mary-Frances and son Sam who are with us today. My mother and step-father, Lila and Fred Hirschmann, who could not be here today but are watching online from their home in Florida. My family members, who were mostly public-school teachers and government workers, instilled in me the importance of public interest work. I want to specifically acknowledge my Uncle George Habib, who not only encouraged me to be an attorney but to also devote my career to public service. My family has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement throughout my life, and it is beyond certain that I would not be before you today without their ongoing love and support.

It is a great honor to be considered for Associate Judge on a court where I have worked for almost 30 years. I have been a Magistrate Judge since 2013 serving in the Family, Criminal and Domestic violence divisions, where I have presided over hundreds of cases in some of our most high-volume courtrooms. In law school, I was a law clerk and investigator for court-appointed criminal defense attorneys. I then represented adults and juveniles as a student attorney in the D.C. Law Students in Court Program (now called Rising for Justice). After graduating, I was a sole practitioner representing individuals in trial and appellate matters pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act. I was fortunate to clerk for then-Associate Judge Robert E. Morin who continues to be an invaluable guide and mentor. Judge Morin encouraged me to gain experience outside the District of Columbia so I accepted a position as an assistant public defender in Fairfax, Virginia. I was working in Fairfax when I received a call from my former professor and colleague, Ed Shacklee, who incidentally last month just retired after 40 years of public service, asking me to return to D.C. as a supervisor and clinical professor at the D.C. Law Students in Court Program. I was honored to spend six years teaching and working to inspire students to think about careers in public service when I was asked to join DC's Children's Law Center. The law center was becoming the largest legal services organization in the city and was the only one to focus on children. I spent seven years working in the Guardian Ad Litem Program, the last two as program director, where I supervised over half of the agencies 80-person staff in the representation of over 500 children a year in the abuse and neglect system.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have served the citizens of the District of Columbia throughout my career. I am humbled by the opportunity, if confirmed, to be an Associate Judge and continue to serve the community I have been a part of for almost 30 years and that I care about so much. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.