

Dear Members of the Vermont Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write in support of the pending nomination of my law partner Christina Nolan to the position of Associate Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court.

For 23 years I have been an attorney at the Burlington law firm Sheehey Furlong & Behm. In that time I have seen the firm grow from seven lawyers to nearly 30 at our largest. I have served as the firm's Managing Partner, for several years served as Director of our litigation group, and have handled numerous appeals before the Vermont Supreme Court and Second Circuit Court of Appeals. Although I am no longer politically active, in the mid-2000's I was elected three times to the Burlington City Council as a Democrat, serving one year as Council President, and also served as Vermont Democratic Party Chair for the 2006 election cycle when Peter Welch joined the House and Bernie Sanders the Senate, and the 2008 election cycle when Obama was elected President.

I believe I am well positioned to evaluate Christina's suitability for the position of Associate Justice. Christina and I first met professionally not as colleagues, but as opposing counsel, years before she joined our firm, when Christina was employed as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of Vermont office. At the time we met I was doing a considerable amount of criminal defense work, often pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act, which provides private counsel for indigent criminal defendants if the Federal Public Defender cannot take the case for one reason or another. In our respective roles on opposing sides of criminal cases, Christina and I had several memorable, serious, stressful cases together, cases involving interstate drug and illegal firearms trafficking and violent crimes.

Even when she was a young prosecutor litigating serious felonies, I took note of the fact that Christina handled every one of her cases with me with focus, thoughtfulness, equanimity, and, for lack of a better way to describe it, the kind of judgment about human behavior they don't teach you in law school. Christina made such an impression on me, in fact, that when I learned she was considering private practice, I immediately contacted my colleagues at Sheehey to let them know we should do everything we possibly could to persuade her to join our firm. I was elated when she did, and her contributions to the firm, both in terms of work and culture, have been exceptional. Although her government work before joining us was exclusively federal, she quickly developed expertise in certain critical areas of state practice, including handling relief from abuse and anti-stalking petitions. Prospective clients sought her out for that expertise; internally, I sought her counsel on those issues when they arose in my practice as well.

Everyone who practices with or against Christina knows she is smart, careful, and hard working; but those are mere gating items for someone being considered for the important position at issue here. What truly sets Christina apart, in my view, is a combination of humility and self-confidence that allows her to be open minded about disagreements and contrary opinions. That is as rare among lawyers as it is in the general population, but if I could identify one quality I would want to have in an Associate Justice, that would be it. In my career I have not met many lawyers who possess this attribute to the degree

Christina does, and if I wasn't worried I'd bore you I could double the length of this email with specific examples. She will make Vermont proud. I support her confirmation without reservation and would be happy to speak directly to the Committee if it so desires.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks.

Ian P. Carleton
Attorney
Sheehey Furlong & Behm P.C.