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Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

Friday, March 11th, 2011

11:00 AM in Room 2C of the LOB

Good morning, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Glenn Cassis the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency. This Commission represents a voice for the African-American community and accomplishes its mission primarily through research, policy analysis, advocacy and outreach. The AAAC is honored to be testifying in support of the honorable Lubbie Harper to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and a Judge of the Superior Court.

We welcome this appointment for many reasons. First this is an opportunity for the third African-American in state history to serve in a judicial capacity that will have a significant impact on the African-American population. African-Americans as a group in this state are embroiled at various levels of the criminal justice system. Roughly 44 percent of the children represented in detention centers in

the state are African-American¹ and at least 42 percent of African-Americans make up the state's prison population.² In addition the lifetime likelihood of incarceration for African Americans is 16.2 percent almost twice that of Hispanics at 9.4 percent and more than six times that of whites at 2.5 percent.³ Abundant research substantiates that race, class, cultural affiliation etc. are all factors that influence juror's decisions in serving justice. As we can see, the statistics are heavily stacked against African-Americans at all entry points of the criminal justice. In view of these facts Judge Lubbie Harper's nomination comes with a sense of hope and optimism.

More importantly Judge Harper is man of integrity and vision. Under his leadership as Chair of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Criminal Justice System, his passion for fairness influenced and guided policies that addressed the disproportionate representation of minorities in the criminal justice system. Under his leadership the Commission has held historic conferences that focused on disparities in the judicial system. His legal experience, accomplishments and qualifications are immeasurable. A statement alone would literally not do enough 'justice'. However some of his more notable accomplishments are as follows; served as President of the Board of Directors of the New Haven Legal Assistance Association for 12 years. He was in private practice of law for over 20 years, specializing in litigation, municipal finance, labor law, education and administrative law, arbitration and contract negotiations. Judge Harper a Democrat was nominated twice by two Republican Governor's, first by Governor Rowland on May 22nd 1997 as a Superior Court Judge and then on January 5th, 2005 by Governor Rell as an Appellate Court Judge. These appointments are testament to his unparalleled legal acumen. Its worth mentioning that prior to his appointment to serve in various courts of the state, Judge Harper was also a long time community activist, serving in a volunteer

¹ Connecticut Voices for the Children, Reforming Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System. *Racial and Ethnic Biases*

² Connecticut Inmate Population by Race and Ethnicity

³ Joint Center Databank, African-Americans, Crime and Criminal Justice

capacity on the Children's Museum of Greater New Haven, the Ulysses S. Grant Foundation and the Urban League to name a few.

We are confident that Judge Harper's wisdom, scholarship and judgment in legal matters will have a positive impact in the Supreme and Superior courts of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.