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April 9, 2015

judgetestimony@cga.ct.gov

The Judiciary Committee
Legislative Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Re-Nomination of Chief Justice Chase Rogers

To the Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Frederic S. Ury and I have been a practicing trial lawyer in the State of Connecticut for 37 years. I am a partner in the law firm of Ury & Moskow, LLC in Fairfield, CT. I was President of the Connecticut Bar Association in 2004-2005; President of the National Conference of Bar Presidents in 2011-2012; and a member of the ABA Ethics 20/20 Commission from 2010-2013. I am presently in my third year as Chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Professionalism and I am presently a member of the ABA Commission on the Future of Legal Services.

As a result of my ABA work, I spend a lot of time travelling around the country talking with other Bar Associations about the future of the delivery of legal services. During those trips, I have had the pleasure of meeting many Supreme Court Justices in other States. One of the things that I can say without any reservation is that Chief Justice Rogers is held in the highest esteem by her colleagues around the country.

I have been very involved over the last 10 years discussing access to justice issues which we as a society are facing with increasing numbers of self-represented parties, as well as the general public's inability to afford to hire an attorney. My interest in the subject is the reason that the President of the ABA, William Hubbard, asked me to sit on the Commission on the Future of Legal Services.

When I speak around the country, I am proud to talk about the various programs we have put in place to help self-represented parties navigate the court system. Our electronic filing system for cases and the fact that most documents in our civil cases are available online is truly something that is envied in many states.

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The judicial website is a tremendous resource to the citizens of the State of CT. On the website, you can easily find every form that you need to prosecute or defend a civil or family case. In addition, there are small claim forms as well as many forms needed for low level criminal and motor vehicle cases. The forms can be filled in online. The amount of videos and resources available online to any citizen, as well as lawyers and self-represented parties, help all of us navigate through the court system.

Since my practice is 50% criminal and 50% civil, I spend just about every day in some court house in the State. I have seen first-hand the work that judges, clerks and the court services centers are doing to assist self-represented clients. My office participates in the volunteer lawyer program for foreclosure court in an effort to help people who are representing themselves in foreclosure cases. The foreclosure mediation program is a terrific program which helps people to modify their mortgage payments so that they can stay in their house. My office has been involved in representing homeowners since the inception of the program. The mediators in the program try their best to help all debtors, whether they are represented by counsel or not, to modify their mortgage so that they can stay in their house.

In addition, the Chief Justice has instituted individual calendaring in civil cases which will help reduce the costs of litigating cases. It will definitely help self-represented parties deal with some of the complex issues of prosecuting or defending a case since the same judge will be involved and responsible for guiding the parties to a resolution either by settlement or trial.

Many of the changes in the court system have come out of the strategic planning sessions Justice Rogers has held around the state with the various stake holders in the court system including lawyers, self-represented parties, and businesses.

One of the programs which my office has utilized a number of times is the mediation program where by agreement, parties can call any judge in the state to ask if that judge would be willing to mediate a case. The judge is free to accept if he or she has the time. This program has allowed parties to choose the judge who they think would be best suited to help resolve their case.

Justice Rogers is willing to listen. I cannot emphasize how important a skill that is in a Chief Justice. Every day lawyers along with court house staff and judges are dealing with people who are in one of the court houses because of a crisis. Generally, they are not happy that they are there. But over the last 8 years, there has been a tremendous effort to speed up the ability to receive answers from clerks and other staff people in a timely fashion. From the marshals at the front door to the clerks' offices and the judges, there has been an increased effort to make the court houses accessible to everyone and to make the process less confusing.

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Is the Judicial Branch perfect? Is the court system perfect? Of course not. None of us are perfect. We live in a complex world with most of society's complicated problems ending up at the door step of the judicial branch every day. The same changes in technology and the internet which make our lives so much richer also present new and complex cases for the court system to have to decide. But the citizens of the State of Connecticut are better off with Chase Rogers as Chief Justice. They can go to bed at night knowing that she cares about everyone who uses the court house or who comes in contact with the judicial branch.

I am grateful as a leader of the bar that she is willing to continue to lead the judicial branch. There is still much work to do. The challenges that are in front of us with access to justice and reducing the cost of litigation are significant. Justice Rogers is the right person at this time to take on those problems and I hope that the Judiciary Committee will endorse her re-nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frederic S. Ury', written in a cursive style.

Frederic S. Ury

FSU:cab