JOINT STATEMENT FROM ELECTED PROSECUTORS IN SUPPORT OF RACHAEL ROLLINS’ NOMINATION FOR U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

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As elected prosecutors currently serving communities across every region of the country, we know that ending the failed policies of mass incarceration is an unequivocally necessary step in building safe, just, and equitable communities. We have served alongside Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins and seen her steadfast commitment to serving every member of her community—including public servants committed to keeping the community safe, people who have been victimized by crime, and individuals who have been ignored or demonized by traditional approaches to prosecution. In a system that often rewards those who blindly adhere to the status quo, she has consistently demonstrated the courage to reject disproven, harmful approaches, and the vision to forge policies that work.

We are well aware that DA Rollins’s nomination for U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts has widespread support from a bipartisan group, including five former U.S. Attorneys, law enforcement leaders (such as the Suffolk County sheriff, the current and most recently retired Boston police commissioners, the Massachusetts State Police colonel, and every police chief in Suffolk county), and a host of others. We are deeply disappointed to see some working to obstruct her nomination with fear-mongering, distortions, and outright lies.

DA Rollins is eminently qualified to be U.S. Attorney. She has a proven record of both enhancing the safety of her jurisdiction and advancing justice. Recently, independent researchers looked at 67,000 cases prosecuted in Suffolk County over 17 years and found that DA Rollins’ groundbreaking policy of presumptively declining to prosecute certain low-level, non-violent offenses dramatically reduced recidivism. During her three years at the helm of the Suffolk District Attorney’s office, she has worked to correct unconstitutional convictions, partnered with community organizations to address substance use disorder, and reinvested in victim services.

The data shows us in no uncertain terms that DA Rollins’ policies have made Boston safer. By reducing the use of the criminal justice system’s inherently limited resources to prosecute minor crimes of poverty and desperation, she has helped thousands of people avoid the justice system’s revolving door and freed up capacity to address the most serious crimes. Yet, during last week’s confirmation hearing, several individuals wilfully misrepresented DA Rollins’ work and claimed that her work in Boston is somehow to blame for the nationwide increase in violent crime seen during the pandemic—despite evidence to the contrary, including data showing that Boston has seen a decrease in major crimes this year, compared to 2020.

Criminal justice reform makes communities safer. The data is clear. Unnecessary incarceration causes financial devastation, breaks family ties, and upends individuals’ lives in a way that often leads to more crime going forward. For years, common-sense reforms have successfully decreased incarceration rates without sacrificing public safety. We know what makes cities safer and it’s not locking more people up—it’s investing in and empowering our communities. And
communities understand this, increasingly embracing investments in prevention over disproven tough-on-crime approaches.

Recent unfounded misrepresentations of Rollins’ exemplary tenure as DA also illustrate the racism underlying attacks on the prosecutorial reform movement. Sadly, the Black female prosecutors at the forefront of bringing prosecution into the 21st century are consistently held to a different standard than their thousands of white male counterparts across the country and all too often face outrageous lies about their records.

Deference to a local Senator’s choice for U.S. Attorney is common practice for good reason—local elected leaders are best positioned to understand the needs of their communities. Significantly, this is the first time in 28 years that a nominee for U.S. Attorney has not been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee thereby requiring further action before consideration by the full Senate.

We applaud the Biden-Harris administration for its nomination of a visionary leader such as DA Rollins, who will, when confirmed, be the first Black woman to serve as U.S. Attorney in Massachusetts. We urge other national leaders to quickly move this capable prosecutor forward without delay.

Signed,

**Diana Becton**  
District Attorney, Contra Costa County, California

**Wesley Bell**  
Prosecuting Attorney, St. Louis County, Missouri

**Buta Biberaj**  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Loudoun County, Virginia

**Sherry Boston**  
District Attorney, DeKalb County, Georgia

**Chesa Boudin**  
District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, California

**Aisha Braveboy**  
State’s Attorney, Prince George’s County, Maryland

**Leevin Camacho**  
Attorney General, Guam

**John Choi**  
County Attorney, Ramsey County (St. Paul), Minnesota
Dave Clegg  
District Attorney, Ulster County, New York

Shameca Collins  
District Attorney, 6th Judicial District, Mississippi

Scott Colom  
District Attorney, 16th Judicial District, Mississippi

Laura Conover  
County Attorney, Pima County (Tucson), Arizona

John Creuzot  
District Attorney, Dallas County, Texas

Satana Deberry  
District Attorney, Durham County, North Carolina

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Virginia

Steve Descano  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Fairfax County, Virginia

Thomas J. Donovan Jr.  
Attorney General, Vermont

Michael Dougherty  
District Attorney, 20th Judicial District (Boulder), Colorado

Mark Dupree  
District Attorney, Wyandotte County (Kansas City), Kansas

Matt Ellis  
District Attorney, Wasco County, Oregon

Keith Ellison  
Attorney General, Minnesota

Kimberly M. Foxx  
State’s Attorney, Cook County (Chicago), Illinois

Kimberly Gardner  
Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis, Missouri
José Garza
District Attorney, Travis County (Austin), Texas

George Gascón
District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California
Former District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, California
Former Chief, San Francisco Police Department, California
Former Chief, Mesa Police Department, Arizona

Sarah F. George
State’s Attorney, Chittenden County (Burlington), Vermont

Joe Gonzales
District Attorney, Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas

Deborah Gonzalez
District Attorney, Western Judicial Circuit (Athens), Georgia

Eric Gonzalez
District Attorney, Kings County (Brooklyn), New York

Mark Gonzalez
District Attorney, Nueces County (Corpus Christi), Texas

Andrea Harrington
District Attorney, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Jim Hingeley
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Albemarle County, Virginia

John Hummel
District Attorney, Deschutes County, Oregon

Natasha Irving
District Attorney, 6th Prosecutorial District, Maine

Michael Jackson
District Attorney, Dallas County, Alabama

Kathy Jennings
Attorney General, Delaware

Shalena Cook Jones
District Attorney, Chatham County (Savannah), Georgia
Lawrence S. Krasner
District Attorney, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rebecca Like
Acting Prosecuting Attorney, County of Kaua’i, Hawaii

Brian S. Mason
District Attorney, 17th Judicial District, Colorado

Ryan Mears
Prosecuting Attorney, Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana

Spencer Merriweather
District Attorney, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Brian Middleton
District Attorney, Fort Bend County, Texas

Stephanie Morales
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

Marilyn Mosby
State’s Attorney, Baltimore City, Maryland

Jody Owens
District Attorney, Hinds County, Mississippi

Alonzo Payne
District Attorney, 12th Judicial District, Colorado

Joseph Platania
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Charlottesville, Virginia

Bryan Porter
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Dalia Racine
District Attorney, Douglas County, Georgia

Karl Racine
Attorney General, District of Columbia

Kwame Raoul
Attorney General, Illinois
Tori Verber Salazar
District Attorney, San Joaquin County, California

Dan Satterberg
Prosecuting Attorney, King County (Seattle), Washington

Eli Savit
Prosecuting Attorney, Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), Michigan

Mike Schmidt
District Attorney, Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon

Daniella Shorter
District Attorney, 22nd Judicial District, Mississippi

Carol Siemon
Prosecuting Attorney, Ingham County (Lansing), Michigan

Gregory Underwood
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Norfolk, Virginia

Matthew Van Houten
District Attorney, Tompkins County (Ithaca), New York

Cyrus R. Vance
District Attorney, New York County (Manhattan), New York

Andrew Warren
State Attorney, 13th Judicial Circuit (Tampa), Florida

Lynneice Washington
District Attorney, Jefferson County, Bessemer District, Alabama

Jared Williams
District Attorney, Augusta, Georgia

Todd Williams
District Attorney, Buncombe County (Asheville), North Carolina

Monique H. Worrell
State Attorney, 9th Judicial District (Orlando), Florida