

**STATEMENT OF KALPANA KOTAGAL  
NOMINEE FOR COMMISSIONER,  
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**May 10, 2022**

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to be a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

I would like to sincerely thank President Biden and Vice President Harris for this nomination.

I am joined here today by my parents – Drs. Shashi Kant and Uma Kotagal, my sister Dr. Meera Kotagal, my husband of twelve years, Wyatt King and our two children, Kishan and Narayan. I want to express my deepest gratitude to each of them. I carry their love and support with me every single day.

I have long felt that my life, and my family’s story, are quintessentially the American story. My parents both immigrated to the United States in the early 1970s. Each came to this country from India – arriving with just \$8 in their pockets – to pursue professional opportunities in their own chosen field of medicine. After completing their training in Detroit and Chicago, they settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, where they raised my sister and me and set out to capitalize on the opportunities that America has provided to so many new arrivals through the generations.

Through their hard work and dedication, they have had a tremendous positive impact on their adopted community. In the process, they have provided enduring examples of what it means to live lives devoted to service. I will always be grateful to my parents for giving my sister and me every opportunity and for teaching us what can be achieved through persistence and a commitment to helping others. I strive to live up to their example every day.

As the child of immigrants, in a family that has truly lived the American dream, I am blessed. I know what is possible in this great country, and I know that it is due in no small part to our nation’s deep commitment to equal opportunity. In the workplace, that means ensuring that all workers are judged on their merits and their ability to do the job. This national

commitment which is made manifest in the work of the EEOC, is integral to ensuring that every American worker has a chance to realize their ultimate potential.

As a civil rights and employment lawyer, I have devoted my professional life to these values. In my sixteen years as a litigator, I have worked to uphold statutes that the EEOC is charged with enforcing. I have filed charges, participated in investigations, and advocated on behalf of my clients before the EEOC, on behalf of veterans with disabilities, pregnant workers, survivors of workplace race and gender harassment, and others. I have seen first-hand the Commission's commitment to excellence and to most effectively utilize resources.

Throughout my career, I have found the business community to be an indispensable ally in the cause of realizing equal opportunity workplaces. In my own practice, I have advised employers in internal investigations and negotiated with major organizations. The vast majority of American businesses comply with the law. Employers, with the help of their employees, are often the *most* knowledgeable about what their workplaces need to ensure equal opportunity.

The goal of equal opportunity in the workplace is a lofty one, but an essential one. Workplaces that are free from discrimination benefit more than just their employees; they also benefit those employees' families and communities and contribute directly to an innovative and dynamic American economy. In short, discrimination-free workplaces benefit all of us.

If confirmed, I plan on listening and working collaboratively, and learning from all stakeholders, employers, the business community, and advocates for workers. I would consider the views of my fellow Commissioners, EEOC staff, Members of Congress, practitioners and academics, and stakeholders alike. The American workplace is dynamic, complex, and multifaceted, and it takes a variety of perspectives to identify and pursue creative strategies as we work toward workplaces free from discrimination. I have taken thoughtful approaches to cutting-edge litigation and advised clients, finding common ground to forge collaborative outcomes.

Throughout my career, I have represented people who have sought to make their workplaces more equitable, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be valued and assessed, to paraphrase Dr. King, by the content of their character and the quality of their work. I have seen firsthand how critical the work of the EEOC is in realizing our national commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for everyone in our great country. It is truly an honor to be considered for the opportunity to be part of the EEOC's important mission.

I thank the Committee for your time and welcome your questions.