

## Monica Fischer

May 22, 2019

Jason Swanson, Vice President  
Business Publications Corporation  
The Depot at Fourth  
100 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309

**Re: Cathy Jury, 2019 Woman of Influence**

Dear Mr. Swanson:

I write in support of the nomination of Cathy Jury as one of the Des Moines Business Record's 2019 Women of Influence.

Quite simply, Cathy is an institution in her own right within the very institution that is our revered and beautiful Iowa State Capitol. For decades, she has advised lawmakers and helped constituents navigate state government, positively impacting Iowa and its citizens in countless meaningful ways.

I worked with Cathy in the Office of Governor Tom Vilsack and Lt. Governor Sally Pederson in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when she served as director gubernatorial appointments. Through that work, Cathy engaged thousands of diverse Iowans in state boards and commissions, giving them a voice and helping ensure the work of the executive branch of government was carried out effectively. The importance of that role cannot be overstated. From the high profile Board of Regents to the more obscure board of mortuary science examiners, every state board and commission must be filled with qualified individuals, balanced by gender, political affiliation and geography. Cathy found them, recruited them, encouraged them through the appointment process and Iowa Senate confirmation and guided them in their service.

One specific set of appointments stands out to me as particularly influential. In 2000, the Iowa Legislature passed and Governor Vilsack signed into law the Vision Iowa Program Act, creating the Vision Iowa Board and codifying the Community Attractions and Tourism program, by which \$300 million was invested in performing arts facilities, parks, museums and other community attractions all across Iowa. The statutory requirements for appointments to this board were complicated. In addition to several department heads and elected officials, the board's membership had to include three members from the general public (one from each of the three tourism regions), a mayor of a city with a population of less than 20,000, a mayor of a city with a population of more than 20,000, a county supervisor from a county whose population ranks in the lowest one-third of all Iowa counties and four members from the general public. Vision Iowa was a new approach, and the demand for funding highly competitive. It was essential the

governor's first appointments to the board be just right. In consultation with Michael Gartner, who would serve as the first chair of the Vision Iowa Board, Cathy got it perfectly right. And though visitors to the Science Center of Iowa or Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines or Kings Pointe Waterpark Resort in Storm Lake or Mason City's Music Man Square or dozens of other special places all across Iowa will probably never know of Cathy's influence, it is a fact Vision Iowa would not have succeeded had the right people not been brought together to lead it.

Cathy also advised Governor Vilsack on judicial appointments, and in doing so, she helped him build a lasting legacy on the state bench. The judges he appointed, with Cathy's help, ensure women and people of color are well represented in our judicial system. It is worth noting that Iowa Supreme Court justices who sacrificed their positions for their important (and correct) ruling on same sex marriage were appointed to their positions by Governor Vilsack when Cathy was advising him on appointments.

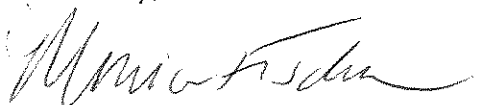
I actually met Cathy many years before I worked with her, back in the 1980s when she was the gatekeeper for the Speaker of the Iowa House of Representative, and I was a student government leader at the University of Iowa. My classmates and I came to the State Capitol to lobby against tuition increases and for campus safety. We had absolutely no clue what we were doing, but Cathy was there to show us what to do and make sure we were heard.

Many Iowans look to Cathy for political advice. She was one of the earliest Iowa supporters of Barack Obama in his historic 2008 Iowa Caucus campaign, which led to other key influencers getting on board. Her counsel and her skills have been instrumental in the election of several women to the Iowa Legislature, including Senate Minority Leader Janet Petersen and House Minority Whip Jo Oldson. It is perhaps a cliché to speak of "the woman behind the curtain" but it is absolutely true that Cathy has promoted other women and their success without regard for her own esteem or reward.

Cathy has been the most important mentor I have had in my 20-year career in public service career. During my own work, first in state government and since for a private charitable foundation supporting human and social services, rare has been the day when I haven't applied something I learned from Cathy or remembered something valuable she told me. When I encounter a difficult situation, it is her voice I hear in my head, guiding me the right way. She is a model of ethical thought and behavior, and she makes all those with whom she works want to be and do better.

Thank you for your consideration of Cathy Jury as a 2019 Woman of Influence and for the Des Moines Business Record's important work recognizing women who are making a difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monica Fischer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Monica Fischer