



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

April 29, 2024

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

In accordance with section 2 of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01), and pursuant to section 401 of the Human Rights Act of 1977, effective December 7, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-216; D.C. Official Code § 2-1404.01), I am pleased to nominate the following individual:

Dr. Maria Burnett
Monroe Street, NW
Washington, DC 20010
(Ward 1)

for reappointment as a member of the Commission on Human Rights, for a term to end December 31, 2026.

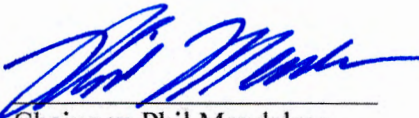
Enclosed, you will find biographical information detailing the experience of the above-mentioned nominee, together with a proposed resolution to assist the Council during the confirmation process.

I would appreciate the Council's earliest consideration of this nomination for confirmation. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Steven Walker, Director, Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments, should the Council require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Muriel Bowser".

Muriel Bowser
Mayor


Chairman Phil Mendelson
at the request of the Mayor

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To confirm the reappointment of Dr. Maria Burnett to the Commission on Human Rights.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this resolution may be cited as the “Commission on Human Rights Maria Burnett Confirmation Resolution of 2024”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia confirms the reappointment of:

Dr. Maria Burnett
Rittenhouse Street, NW
Washington, DC 20015
(Ward 4)

as a member of the Commission on Human Rights, established by section 401 of the Human Rights Act of 1977 (D.C. Law 15-216; D.C. Official Code § 2-1404.03), for a term to end December 31, 2026.

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia shall transmit a copy of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the nominee and to the Office of the Mayor.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

- A human rights lawyer, advisor and activist for social justice with 20 years of rigorous policy, research and writing experience; Proven leader in managing programs, advocacy and communications efforts as part of and alongside civil society coalitions and foundations on issues of human rights, rule of law and social justice.
- Passionately committed to a career leading and supporting efforts to address injustice, inequality and protecting civic space; excellent written and oral communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills; extensive experience of managing and mentoring partners and staff across time zones.
- Experienced media commentator on human rights and rule of law, often interviewed on television and radio, and authoring numerous reports and op-eds.

EDUCATION

YALE LAW SCHOOL, Juris Doctor, New Haven, CT, USA, June 2005

Student Director, The Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic; Student Director, The Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights; Clinic Member, Immigration Law Clinic; Articles Editor, *Yale Journal of Human Rights and Development Law*; Awarded the Khosla Memorial Fund for Human Dignity Prize Awarded to the student who “best demonstrates an active engagement in advancing the values of human dignity in the international arena.”

THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION, M.A., Highest Distinction, History and Theory of Architecture and Urban Planning, London, United Kingdom, August 2000

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, A.B., *summa cum laude*, Arch & Urban Planning, June 1998, Princeton, NJ

Awarded the Henry Labouisse '22 Prize Fellowship for “academic achievement, moral and intellectual leadership and the firm desire to pursue a career focused on the systematic and permanent improvement in the conditions of distressed and disadvantaged groups.” Significant financial award to support low-income architectural in South Africa after graduation; Awarded the Joseph Shanely Memorial Prize for outstanding work in the School of Architecture.

University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa - 1997 to study politics, low-income housing and threats to good governance

Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China - 1992 to study intensive Chinese grammar, history and politics

WORK EXPERIENCE

Fund for Global Human Rights, Consultant, Washington D.C. January 2020 – present
Facilitate and strategize grantmaking, report writing, due diligence, technical assistance and movement building to human rights and rule of law organizations; Conduct outreach to support the Fund in hiring Uganda-based staff, provide strategic guidance on political developments and challenges facing civic groups.

O'Neill Institute for Global Health Law, Georgetown Univ. Law Center, Consultant, Washington D.C.
June 2020

Researched and drafted a report detailing human rights abuses in the context of 16 governments' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, commissioned and to be published by UNAIDS, Geneva, Switzerland.

CivSOURCE Africa, Consultant, Kampala, Uganda and Washington D.C. May – November 2019
Researching and authoring a study of private and bilateral donor efforts (led by CivSource and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund) to address threats to civil society in Uganda and East Africa more broadly, to map existing organizational and collective efforts aimed at promoting and defending civic space to detail how the “closing space” trend manifests at national, district and local levels; carried out over 50 interviews with a broad range of donors, civic groups and social movement leaders to highlights best practices for resistance to threats, new digital and non-digital protection strategies and possible innovative approaches to philanthropic support.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, Director, East & Horn of Africa/Associate Director, Africa Division Washington D.C.
July 2016 – December 2018

Managed a team of researchers advocating for improved human rights and governance in Uganda, Kenya and Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Tanzania; supervised HRW's annual strategic planning, research and advocacy while continuing research portfolio on Uganda (see details below). As a lead supervisor for work on East Africa, I managed the production and verification of HRW's content, acted as a regional spokesperson, trained staff in research and advocacy methodologies, ensured effective collaboration with local and international civil society groups and social movements across East Africa and strategized effective policy and advocacy recommendations. Conducted and attended trainings in open source investigations, digital security and protection from surveillance, among other challenges. Cultivated funders and spoke at public and private events to raise funding for HRW in Germany, Australia, the US and UK. Full budgetary oversight for all East Africa work

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, Team Leader/Senior Researcher, Africa Division – Kampala, Uganda & Wash D.C.
January 2013 – July 2016

Managed a team of researchers working on human rights abuses in Uganda, Kenya and Somalia; maintained a research and advocacy focus on Uganda (see details below), while expanding management portfolio, including staff supervision, research priorities and leading advocacy efforts to achieve positive change, bringing attention to a range of abuses including threats to free expression, association and assembly, sexual and gender based violence in conflict, abuses of internally displaced people, and violence by armed groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army and the armed Islamist group, Al-Shabaab.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, Researcher/Senior Researcher, Africa Division – Kampala, Uganda & Wash D.C.
December 2007-December 2012

Conducted in-depth research and advocacy on human rights abuses in East Africa; authored reports and analyses of violations of the right to health, HIV/AIDS policies, torture, threats to elections and free expression, as well as corruption, land and environmental rights, and threats to the lesbian, gay and transgender community; monitored major political developments, craft multi-year advocacy strategies to improve human rights protections and development programs, drafted numerous press releases and op-eds, submissions to governments and international bodies; lead advocacy meetings with key stakeholders such including heads of state, cabinet-level ministers and security leadership; briefed high-level U.N. and bi-lateral donors on development and human rights challenges in East Africa; routinely collaborate and supported social movements of local organizations throughout East Africa for innovative research and advocacy; frequently quoted in the media on a wide range of subjects; managed local and international staff and consultants, trained new HRW staff on research methodology, writing and advocacy strategies. Promoted to Senior Researcher in June 2010.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, Researcher/Legal representative, Africa Division – Bujumbura, Burundi
May 2005-November 2007

Conducted research and advocacy on human rights abuses in Burundi and Rwanda, under the leadership of Alison Des Forges; monitored political developments and drafted reports and press releases on human rights and development challenges; Carried out trainings on human rights investigation and advocacy strategies with local non-governmental organizations; collaborated with local organizations to advocate for policy and legislative changes; Legally established and managed HRW's Burundi field presence including contracting with local staff, ensuring tax and labor law compliance. Managed local staff, translators, and fixers.

DEPT. OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, Legal Associate – Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, Summer 2004

Drafted legislation to combat human trafficking to bring islands in the South Pacific into compliance with the 1951 U.N. Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons; collaborated with the President of Micronesia and congressmen to prepare the bill for congressional review; drafted changes to foreign investment and immigration laws to improve equality.

SUSTAINABILITY, Legal Intern – London, UK Summer 2003
Co-authored report examining emerging areas of corporate liability for violations of human rights, health and environmental standards for an international consultancy specializing in business strategies for sustainability founded by John Elkington; researched and wrote chapters on the Alien Tort Claims Act, tort law in India and South Africa, and potential litigation for climate change.

OPEN SOCIETY JUSTICE INITIATIVE, Legal Intern – New York, NY / London, UK Summer 2003
Researched and wrote memoranda on European national laws and EU law on immigration for international conference on the rights of migrants.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, Africa Division, Research Assistant – New York, NY 2001-02

Researched human rights abuses and supported researchers focused on Swaziland and West Africa, monitored major political developments in these countries; helped in drafting reports, articles and press releases; created, produced and maintained the French language website; coordinated a staff of seven volunteers.

FREELANCE WRITER / CONSULTANT IN WEST AFRICA 2000-02

Published articles in various international journals and magazines, including the BBC's *Focus on Africa*, *Index on Censorship*, *The American Scholar*, *The Princeton Alumni Weekly*, and *Blue*. Conducted research for *The Economist* in West Africa, primarily during the 2000 presidential elections in Ghana. Consulted with local organizations working on women's rights to housing, land, and water, advising on architectural solutions and government relations – predominantly in Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Togo.

YUKUZENZELE WOMEN'S SAVINGS SCHEME, Architectural Consultant — Philippi, South Africa 1998-2000

Collaborated with local architects and women living in squatter camps to design and build a community of 250 low-income homes in Philippi, outside Cape Town; facilitated logistics on site; drafted plans for submission to the Cape Planning Authority; oversaw on-site surveying and basic construction.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Bar Admission: Washington D.C.

Volunteer with the Capitol Area Immigrants' Rights Project, Washington DC.

Significant *probono* work as an expert in asylum proceedings for individuals from East Africa, particularly Rwanda and Uganda.

Language abilities: French (Proficient); Italian (Proficient); Albanian (Intermediate); Mandarin Chinese (Basic).



Executive Office of the Mayor – Mayor’s Office of Talent and Appointments
John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 600 | Washington, DC 20004

Dr. Maria E. Burnett



Mr. Adam E. Maier is a proven leader and change agent with extensive experience in government operations. He is a current member of the Commission on Human Rights.

For 14 years, she worked with the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, first in Burundi and then later in Uganda and was eventually Director for the East and Horn of Africa. Dr. Burnett has researched and written on a broad range of human rights issues, including police brutality, free expression, child soldiers, women’s and children’s rights, and the use of torture and extrajudicial executions and criminal justice reform in Central and East Africa. She has briefed high-level U.N. and U.S. officials, as well as given testimony before the US Congress and EU parliament. Before joining Human Rights Watch, Burnett worked as an architect and journalist.

Dr. Burnett is being appointed to the Commission of Human Rights, because she has dedicated her career to human rights, and would love to contribute some of her knowledge and experiences to serve District residents.

A Ward 1 resident, Dr. Burnett earned her Bachelor of Arts from Princeton University, her of Master of Arts from the Architectural Association in London, and her Juris Doctor from Yale Law School.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser



Office of the General Counsel to the Mayor

To: Tommy Wells, Steve Walker
From: Betsy Cavendish
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: Legal sufficiency review of Resolutions nominating Maria Burnett and Adam Maier as members of the Commission on Human Rights

This is to Certify that this office has reviewed the above-referenced resolutions and found them to be legally unobjectionable. If you have any questions in this regard, please do not hesitate to call Erika Satterlee, Deputy General Counsel, Executive Office of the Mayor, at 202-724-1303, or me at 202-724-7681.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth A. Cavendish". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Elizabeth A. (Betsy) Cavendish