

November 30, 2016

Dear DNC Member,

I write to strongly encourage you to support Jaime Harrison for Chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). He has the experience, vision, and commitment to rebuild our party and to return us to victory on national, state, and local levels.

A native of Orangeburg, South Carolina, Jaime was born to a teenage mother who dropped out of school when he was born. Orangeburg is a small, rural town in my Congressional district, which boasts two historically black colleges, including my alma mater, but where the opportunities for many local residents are few. Fortunately, Jaime was reared in a loving home, where his grandparents of modest means, along with his mother, instilled in him strong values, the importance of hard work and service to others.

I first met Jaime in 1993, when he was an 11th grader at Orangeburg-Wilkerson High School. Jaime was President of the National Honor Society at his school, and he invited me to be the speaker for their regional conference. He impressed me as student leader, a young student of politics, and obviously, a good student.

Despite the challenges of his early life, Jaime beat all odds and made it to Yale University for his undergraduate studies. Many of you who hail from rural areas will understand what an extraordinary leap it is for a young public school student from Orangeburg to make it to the Ivy League. During the summer after his junior year, Jaime was an intern in my office, sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. After graduating from Yale, Jaime returned to Orangeburg and taught social studies at his high school alma mater. After two years of teaching, he returned to Washington and joined the staff of College Summit, a nonprofit organization that helps high schools raise their college enrollment rates. Pursuing a lifelong dream, he also enrolled in the evening program at Georgetown University's law school.

As a young staffer, Jaime developed a reputation as a "go to" staffer with keen political instincts. He gained the respect of Members of our Caucus, and quickly climbed the ranks to more senior positions. At age 30, he became Executive Director of the House Democratic Caucus, the umbrella organization for the business of House Democrats. When I became Majority Whip in 2007, Jaime was appointed Floor Director, the top staff position in our vote-counting operation.

When we were in the majority, the Democratic Caucus was more diverse than it had ever been. Our members ran the spectrum from progressives to Blue Dogs, representing districts across the country with all types of ideological and demographic profiles. In order to get the 218 votes needed to pass any piece of legislation, we had to build consensus within the Caucus from among many, sometimes competing, interests and perspectives. As Floor Director, Jaime developed strong relationships with all Members of our Caucus and executed a Whip operation where we successfully advanced our Democratic agenda, often with little room for error on close votes.

In 2012, Jaime moved back to our beloved home state and immediately began working to rebuild the South Carolina Democratic Party. He was elected State Party Chair in 2013,

becoming the first African American to hold the post. Jaime moved quickly to reorganize the party, build our candidate bench, and expand the party's outreach into every corner of the state. He established the John Spratt Annual Issues Conference and the James E. Clyburn Political Fellowship, where young Democrats from around the state are trained as candidates, county party leaders, campaign operatives, and leaders.

I often say that no one is any more or any less than what their experiences allow them to be. Jaime's experiences have made him adept at connecting with people at all levels – from South Carolina fish fries and Maryland crab boils to the hallowed halls of our finest colleges and universities. Jaime is well regarded by many of my colleagues here and by Democrats from around the country. We need someone who understands, appreciates, and values the diversity of our party. Jaime Harrison is pitch-perfect for the job.

Our next DNC chair must work full-time to rebuild our party. The Chair must bridge the divide between those who navigate our political corridors and those who work hard, play by the rules, and want little more than to care for their families and to create stability and opportunity for their children and grandchildren. I know from over 20 years of experiences with Jaime that he is the right person for the job. His unrelenting work ethic, keen intellect, collaborative spirit, and utmost integrity will serve our party well. I commend him to you for your sincere consideration and, hopefully, strong support.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely,

James E. Clyburn