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Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today—and thank you to Senator Stabenow for her gracious introduction. I am honored and grateful that President Biden has nominated me to serve as an Assistant Administrator for the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

I'd like to thank my wife, Virginia Murphy, who is here today along with our three children, Megan, Graham, and Emily, and our eldest granddaughter, Addie Mae. Virginia has been steadfast in her support of what she terms my “quest” to return to public service. As you know, the challenges involved in public service are visited most often upon family members. I am grateful to each of them.

My father's family fled Nazi Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1938, a generation after my mother's family fled persecution in Russia. They are not with us today, but they are in my thoughts. Their sacrifices and this country made my accomplishments possible.

Just before he became President, John F. Kennedy said, “for of those to whom much is given, much is required.” I repeat those words to my students on the first day of law school, because I believe that all of us have an obligation to help those who are less fortunate and to do what we can to help make the world a better place. I strive to remain always true to those values.

I have devoted my career to seeking justice for communities exposed to harmful pollution and ensuring that all Americans can breathe fresh air and drink clean water. Our Nation's environmental laws provide exceptional tools for improving the lives of hard-working Americans and meeting our obligations as stewards of the environment for future generations.

I served for 17 years at the Justice Department, where the cases I prosecuted were not about winning or losing but about promoting fair enforcement of our environmental laws and ensuring that companies who act with ethics and integrity are not at a competitive disadvantage with those who flout the law. I was the lead prosecutor in the first environmental justice criminal trial in the United States, where residents of West Memphis lived next to a hazardous waste site for more than a decade. I tried a knowing endangerment case in Idaho, where a 20-year-old worker suffered severe brain damage because his employer illegally forced him to dispose of cyanide waste. In each of my cases, it was a privilege to appear in court "for the United States of America."

In June 2000, I became the sixth Chief of the Environmental Crimes Section at the Justice Department. In that role, starting during the last year of the Clinton administration and continuing for 6½ years of the Bush administration, I led an office dedicated to the principled and consistent enforcement of the criminal provisions of our environmental laws and ensuring that companies and individuals who put our communities at risk were brought to justice.

If confirmed by the Senate, my long history of government service—during both Democratic and Republican administrations—would allow me to provide leadership with support

from career staff whom I know, respect, and admire. I also would offer valuable experience and perspective from outside Washington gained over the last 14 years as a law professor.

When the University of Michigan recruited me to serve as the inaugural director of its environmental law and policy program, I welcomed the opportunity because I saw mentoring the next generation of lawyers—at one of our top public universities—as a natural continuation of my public service at the Justice Department. My work at Michigan has broadened my perspective about how illegal pollution harms our communities, enhanced my understanding of how the federal government must work in partnership with state environmental protection efforts, and given me the opportunity to work closely with environmental groups and the business community. If confirmed, I will continue listening to those varied perspectives and promote partnerships across the federal government and with outside stakeholders.

I still believe that protecting our environment is as an area where we can find common ground, as we have in the past. We should highlight the efforts of companies that promote ethics, integrity, and environmental stewardship, while holding accountable companies who break the law and expose our communities to harm. I hope to provide the broad-based, open-minded, and experienced leadership needed to ensure the effectiveness of the environmental laws passed by Congress and promote a sustainable future for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.