

Statement of Michal Freedhoff
Nominee for the Position of Assistant Administrator for the
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention
in the
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Before the
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

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Good morning Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and other Members of the Committee.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention at EPA. I am fortunate to have what I think of as three honorary home state Senators who serve on this Committee – Senator Cardin, from my adopted home state of Maryland; Senator Markey, my first Capitol Hill boss and for whom I worked for more than 15 years; and Chairman Carper, who gave me the opportunity to work on this Committee's staff for the past four years.

I'm joined here today by my twin daughters, Zahava and Rena Van Leeuwen. Watching from home are my husband Michael, my son Sammy and daughter Vivienne. My late mother, Helen Freedhoff, and my 85-year-old father Stephen, who is stuck behind a closed border in Canada, would have been here if they could have been.

I moved to Washington the day after I defended my PhD in chemistry. Although I didn't have a job lined up, I was drawn to working in government, knowing I could use my scientific background to make a difference in people's lives through public policy. During my time on Capitol Hill, I was remarkably fortunate to have had the rare opportunity to work with so many of you and your staffs to rewrite the Toxic Substances Control Act. I certainly never imagined I'd

have this once in a lifetime honor to be President Biden's nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, and implement the chemical safety law we all worked so hard on.

During my more than two decades working for the legislative branch, I believe I earned a reputation for being fair, approachable, substantive, and able to craft consensus by bringing people with disparate viewpoints together to effectively solve problems . Many provisions of this Committee's unanimously supported 2019 PFAS legislation demonstrate the way I approached the legislative process. Some of these measures – such as adding almost 200 PFAS chemicals to the Toxics Release Inventory that Senators Capito, Gillibrand and Carper co-authored – fall within the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention's authority that I would manage if confirmed.

It is that spirit of collaboration that I would bring to this new role. I believe that we can, and we must, fulfill EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment in a manner that includes input provided by a diverse set of stakeholders. That applies to ensuring chemical safety under TSCA, to providing safe, effective tools for farmers to protect our food supply under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), and to working collaboratively with industrial and environmental stakeholders to incentivize more sustainable practices and products in our Pollution Prevention programs like Safer Choice.

If confirmed, one of the responsibilities I most look forward to is implementing the Frank Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act – TSCA. I worked closely with many of your staffs, especially in the last year and a half prior to enactment, and consider that work to be a highlight of my career. Some combination of the complexity of the subject matter, the intense debate surrounding some of the issues, and the shared legislative battle scars made the bipartisan team of staff, who all spent months together as we worked to get it done, among my most trusted

colleagues and friends. We took the time needed to understand each other's perspectives and made important compromises as we negotiated difficult and sometimes divisive provisions of the bill. That hard work produced a law that was supported nearly unanimously by both chambers of Congress and by a wide range of industry, environmental, and other stakeholders.

I also want to provide my assurance that if confirmed, I will ensure that our activities will be conducted transparently, using the best available scientific information, and informed by EPA's expert career staff. As a scientist by training, I know that not every scientific disagreement is a scientific integrity issue or other type of misconduct. I also know that sometimes the Agency's leaders need to make difficult policy decisions about which there is not a scientific consensus. However, there can be no tolerance for excluding key data or directing the alteration of scientific conclusions – otherwise, the Agency's credibility with the public, its stakeholders and the courts ultimately suffers. While you may not ultimately agree with every policy choice our office makes, I can commit to you that if confirmed, all our decisions will be well documented, transparently made, and will seek and incorporate input from all stakeholders.

Finally, while I have worked closely with EPA staff for years, I have developed newfound appreciation for their dedication, talent and resilience since arriving at the Agency a few months ago. I'm looking forward to working with the scientific, legal, and policy staff to implement America's chemical and pesticide safety programs. If confirmed, I'm confident that with their partnership we can move TSCA implementation forward in a manner that honors the late Senator Lautenberg's legacy and lives up to Congress's expectations that the EPA uses its new authority to protect Americans against the risks of unsafe chemicals.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to your questions.