

***Catherine J.K. Sandoval***  
**Statement to the U.S. Senate**  
**Environment and Public Works Committee**  
**In Support of My Confirmation to Serve as a Member of the**  
**U.S. Chemical Safety and**  
**Hazard Investigation Board**

**November 17, 2022**

Senators, thank you for this opportunity to discuss my nomination to serve as a Member of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. I would like to thank President Biden for the honor of this nomination. I'd also like to thank my extended family, particularly my husband Steve Smith, my sister Barbara Sandoval, my late sister Anna Lugo, my father Vernon Kissée, and my friends, colleagues, and Santa Clara University for their support and encouragement of my safety leadership work.

In the decades before the CSB was founded, prior to the Clean Air Act, and before the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, my great uncle, Ishmael Martinez, was killed in a chemical explosion at the Apache Powder Company near Benson, Arizona. Apache Powder made nitroglycerin-based dynamite used in the mines near my mother's hometown, a small town served by a rural electric company. My mother, Maria Elena Martinez Sandoval-Kissée, who watches this hearing from heaven, my uncle Juan and Aunt Tina often talked about the fear and dread they felt as the explosion rocked the town. Fear quickly turned to shock and sadness as they learned that several workers were killed in the blast including tio Ishmael, who lived with their family. A joint funeral mass, and the birth and naming of my cousin Ishmael, better known as Smiles, in memory of my great uncle, began the journey toward community healing. That company operates today as Apache Nitrogen Products, manufacturing ammonium nitrate-based products through safety management systems now required by OSHA and EPA rules.

As my family's history illustrates, the CSB's mission to protect people and the environment through independent investigations and recommendations that drive chemical safety is vital to communities, families, workers, the environment, and the economy. The chemical incidents the CSB investigates are often lose, lose, lose, lose calamities. They may: 1) injure or kill workers; 2) cause community harms including injury, death, property damage, and loss of job opportunities; 3) release hazardous chemicals into the environment; and 4) generate losses for investors and insurers. The CSB's root cause analysis and recommendations can create quadruple wins that protect safety, safeguard lives and the environment, and promote economic opportunity.

If honored by Senate confirmation, I would bring to the CSB more than thirty years of regulatory and legal experience, two decades of safety leadership, and expertise as a tenured Energy, Communications, Antitrust, and Contracts Law Professor at Santa Clara University. My collaborative management experience for multi-billion-dollar budget organizations would contribute to effective CSB operations.

As a former Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and former Undersecretary and Staff Director of California's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH), I gained experience in collaborative response to chemical incidents and safety measure development. As a CPUC Commissioner, my colleagues and I responded to the largest industrial methane leak in U.S. history at the Aliso Canyon natural gas storage facility in northern Los Angeles, California. To address the safety, air pollution, and energy challenges this 2015 incident created, we listened to communities, worked with public and private stakeholders, and engaged with experts to conduct a root cause analysis and adopt responsive measures.

The Aliso Canyon investigation built on expertise developed in responding to the 2010 natural gas explosion in San Bruno, California caused by Pacific Gas & Electric. That explosion killed eight people and leveled a neighborhood. The CPUC's root cause analysis examined the explosion's causes including pipeline metallurgy and welding, process safety deficiencies, record-keeping and operational practices, and risk identification and management.

These experiences, and my work with the California Highway Patrol in responding to refinery incidents when I was BTH Agency Staff Director and Undersecretary, highlight the importance of safety management systems, operational integrity, transparency, and public communication. My experience in working with first responders during and following incidents, and in developing policy with first-responder input would be an asset to CSB investigations and safety recommendations. My work with underserved and disadvantaged rural, urban, and tribal communities would enhance CSB community collaboration. My approach to CSB investigations would be fact-driven and faithful to the agency's statutory safety mission. If I were to earn the honor of Senate confirmation, I would serve the CSB and American people with dedication and diligence. Thank you.