

Statement of Dr. Jennifer Clyburn Reed
Hearing on Nominations
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
October 27, 2021

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito and Members of the Committee; Good morning and thank you for granting me this opportunity to appear before you as you consider President Joe Biden's nomination of me for Federal Co-chair of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission. I also want to thank your staffs for the time spent with me over the past several days. The discussions have been engaging and informative.

I am grateful to President Biden for the faith and confidence placed in me by this nomination. If afforded the opportunity to serve, I pledge to prove your confidence well spent and do my family and friends proud.

Here with me today; my husband of 29 years, Mississippi native and Florida A&M graduate Walter Reed; virtually, my son Walter AC Reed, a graduate of Coastal Carolina University and daughter Sydney Reed, a Mississippi State University graduate and 3rd year medical student at the Medical University of South Carolina. My father, The Honorable Jim Clyburn, with whom you are probably familiar, my sisters Mignon and Angela Clyburn, father and sister-in-law, Jackson State alumni, Dr. Walter Reed and Dr. Kathy Taylor. And to the kinship and friendship circles supporting from home, thank you.

I began my professional career 29 years ago as a public school educator with a Master's degree. Over the next 25 years, I served as a classroom teacher, middle school basketball coach and State Department of Education specialist. Along the way, I earned two additional academic credentials, an Education Specialist and doctorate from Nova Southeastern University in Florida. I concluded my educational career as Director of a teaching equity center at the University of South Carolina, where I also co-founded the Apple Core Initiative, a teacher recruitment and retention scholarship program. I have continued my commitment to education as a committee member of the Emily E. Clyburn Honors College endowment at my state's only publicly supported HBCU, South Carolina State University.

Throughout these professional roles, I have remained true to my father's counsel that one should, "Find something to do for which you are not paid." My community service began as a Girl Scout, then tutor at a public housing tutorial center with my sorority sisters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. I served as board chair of the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council and currently serve as president of a non-profit which promotes first-time homeownership and the preservation and restoration of distressed and abandoned properties. I believe that this background would be beneficial to me as I seek to continue my public service in a broader capacity to a wider community through the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, authorized in 2008, focuses on distressed economic conditions in portions of six states – Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina,

North Carolina, Virginia, and all of Florida. Six states share two active regional commissions – Delta Regional Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission. If confirmed, my initial goal will be to assess the needs of each community within the Commission’s 342 counties to identify challenges and determine the tools needed to progress from distressed into transitional or attainment status. The Commission would then work closely with economic development districts, in partnership with state and local leaders, to formulate regional action plans using current and trending statistics with the input of community voices. Believe me, I learned early in my career that one size does not fit all. The Commission would seek to fund entities that make economic development a sustainable priority, while stimulating local entrepreneur development and nurturing private investment.

The formula used to target distressed counties through Congressman Clyburn’s 10-20-30 plan states that 10% of certain appropriated funds be targeted to persistent poverty communities identified by the Census Bureau where 20% or more of the population has lived at or below the poverty level for 30 or more years. According to a report from the Congressional Research Service defining persistent poverty counties, 407 are in the United States. Ninety-two or 22.6% of them fall within the jurisdiction of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

Working in tandem with state and local municipalities to create opportunities to close gaps in educational attainment, workforce preparedness, job creation, and physical and human infrastructure, are challenges that beg for cooperation at all levels. And, if confirmed, the Commission will not waste valuable time re-creating the wheel. Instead, it will consult with other Federal co-chairs and emulate best practices.

If confirmed, I will carry out the objectives of the Commission to strengthen areas with the greatest needs and I look forward to working with this Committee to ensure the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission works for its citizens.

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear today.

I look forward to your questions.