WRITTEN STATEMENT

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

TO THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, members of the Environment and Public Works Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It feels a bit like a homecoming to return to this Committee where I once had the privilege of serving on staff. Although my former boss is no longer on the dais, I know I am not the only one who finds themselves repeating his trademark sayings - and I suspect that Chairman Capito might miss a few of them from time to time as well.

It has been nearly a year since I had the honor to testify before this Committee as a nominee, and since that time much has changed. I have now had the privilege of serving as a Commissioner for the past eight months, and the importance of the NRC's mission to enable the safe use of commercial nuclear technology, as seen through the broader lens of tackling major societal challenges facing our nation, has become even clearer to me. We desperately need clean, reliable, and affordable energy to meet not only today's needs, but also the projected growth in electricity demand nationwide. This imperative has precipitated a cultural shift that has empowered every member of our staff to innovate the way we conduct our business agencywide. Nuclear energy is undergoing a period of rapid evolution, and the NRC must evolve in parallel to meet this moment and the challenges of tomorrow.

Speaking of change, from a personal standpoint, my wife and I recently welcomed the arrival of our second child just a few short weeks ago. That experience has only strengthened my sense

of responsibility for the future we are building for the generations that will follow and underscores the vital work of the NRC.

While much has changed, my priorities as a Commissioner that I presented to this Committee remain as relevant today as they did a year ago. The path to achieving the safe deployment of new nuclear power generation—both through innovations in the operating fleet and advance reactor designs—requires a proactive approach that anticipates technical issues, where possible, far ahead of the license review process. We, as regulators, must prepare with clear, efficient, and predictable licensing pathways that protect safety without unnecessary delay.

Congress provided us with important tools to do just that. The bipartisan ADVANCE Act, which passed a little over a year ago, has given the NRC both the mandate and flexibility to modernize our licensing framework, strengthen international nuclear cooperation, and expand the agency's capacity to review innovative designs. I'm keenly invested in the implementation of the ADVANCE Act, which I believe firmly set the NRC on a path to evolving into a more agile, forward-looking agency. The agency's efforts under the ADVANCE Act have now been amplified with Executive Order 14300, "Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission," which calls on the federal government to accelerate nuclear energy deployment, including next-generation nuclear technologies. The NRC is working diligently to implement both the ADVANCE Act and Executive Order 14300 and transform the agency into a more modern, agile organization.

As exciting as the prospects for new reactors are, we cannot lose sight of the importance of a strong, reliable, efficient regulatory regime for the current operating reactor fleet as well as materials licensees. Even considering the rapid expansion of nuclear reactors around the world, the United States still maintains the largest fleet of light water reactors, and it's the current fleet that will meet energy demands in the near term. The agency must maintain the ability to effectively respond to licensing needs, including the high volume of power uprate applications

currently anticipated. We cannot afford to be distracted from our core responsibilities to protect public health and safety or compromise predictability or stability for the hundreds of licensees whom we regulate.

The only way to accomplish all that is required of the NRC now and in the future is through a strong, well-resourced workforce. The NRC staff has always demonstrated an exceptional level of technical and regulatory expertise, and, particularly in recent months, has shown an incredible resilience and an ability to rise to the occasion. That said, we've seen many highly experienced employees leaving the agency for other jobs, particularly as the nuclear landscape is ripe with a variety of opportunities. Cultivating the rich institutional talent within the agency is more important now than ever, in order to effectively perform our mission as well as train and prepare our staff and leaders for the next 50 years and beyond.

Further, a central value of the NRC is – and continues to be – openness. Openness has been foundational to the NRC from its origins when the Atomic Energy Commission's dual mandate to promote civilian uses of nuclear energy and protect public safety was divided between the Department of Energy and the NRC. That purposeful divide, with NRC's emphasis on openness, ensures that the agency devotes its full focus to assuring safety and security for the public. The NRC exercises deep expertise in public engagement and coordination with State and local governments. This engagement and public trust in a strong, reliable regulator is critical to unlocking the benefits of nuclear technology.

You have my commitment to uphold the core principles on which this agency was built as we continue to transform.

I want to close by thanking my wife Jennifer for being so resilient and steadfast throughout these past few months. Jennifer, your unwavering support strengthens my resolve to serve the American people in this role with integrity and purpose.

I thank the members of this Committee for your support, and I look forward to your questions.