Aaron L. Szabo
Nominee to be Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation
of the Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and distinguished members of this committee. I am honored to be here today and deeply grateful to President Trump for nominating me to serve as Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and help protect America's air. I also want to thank Administrator Zeldin for his trust, both in my current role and this nomination. I would also like to thank my wife Pamela, my parents, in-laws, and other friends and colleagues that are here supporting me today in person and virtually. I would not be here today without them.

I sit before you today as the nominee for Assistant Administrator of the Office of Air and Radiation who suffers from a chronic lung disease. I was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis at six months old. Throughout my life, I have taken hundreds of thousands of pills, spent countless hours using nebulizers, and been hospitalized multiple times. While it has not always been easy, unlike many others with Cystic Fibrosis, I am blessed to be alive today.

Because of my lung disease, I have always been acutely aware of air quality. Growing up, I could feel the impact of poor air quality in my lungs.

After college, I followed in my parents' footsteps as federal employees and began my professional career in government service as a career employee at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). At the NRC, I had the privilege to work with and learn from exceptional hard-working career staff for six and a half years.

In 2014, I joined the White House and served in the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). At OIRA, I had the opportunity to work with EPA career staff and both Democratic and Republican political officials. I saw firsthand the process of translating policy direction into regulatory outcomes consistent with laws and facts. For example, during the Obama Administration I worked as hard as I could to complete the Clean Power Plan, 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), and oil and natural gas methane regulations. Then, during the Trump Administration, I continued with that same dedication while working on rescinding the Clean Power Plan, revising the oil and natural gas methane regulations, and implementing President Trump's Two-for-One Executive Order.

After over 10 years of federal service, I transitioned to the private sector where I learned how regulated entities comply with the federal government's thousands of regulations and policies. I also saw firsthand that the people working in these companies want to ensure the environment is properly protected.

I rejoined the federal government on inauguration day for the first time as a political appointee. Currently, I serve as Senior Advisor to the Administrator of EPA.

If I have the honor to be confirmed to be head of the Office of Air and Radiation, I commit to you and to the American people that all this experience will guide me in this role. I will give my utmost every day working with the talented career staff and responsible stakeholders to provide the best and most durable air quality solutions for the nation.

Since the enactment of the Clean Air Act, the United States has made remarkable progress in reducing air pollution. We have seen significant decreases in carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, ground-level ozone, particulate matter and other hazardous air pollutants – all while our economy has continued to grow. I believe all those who worked to improving air quality for the past fifty plus years, whether it be within or outside the government, deserve our appreciation for their successes.

Congress structured the Clean Air Act around the principle of cooperative federalism and controlling air pollution at its source is the primary responsibility of States and local governments. EPA must always work hand-in-glove with its state partners to ensure that air quality standards are attained and maintained. The best environmental results are reached in a collaborative way. This was the wise decision by Congress in establishing the Clean Air Act and it remains the best approach today.

One subject area that was not on Congress' radar when it enacted the Clean Air Act in 1970 was climate change. I believe the climate is changing. EPA must always carefully analyze all matters before it to make sure they are squarely grounded in statutory authority, are sound policy, and are based on a robust evidentiary record.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work to ensure that we are mitigating traditional air pollution. As someone with a lung disease, I find it deeply concerning that there are around 140 million people that currently live in nonattainment areas, many of which have been living in those nonattainment areas for decades. We should prioritize helping these areas achieve compliance and improve air quality.

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and all the members of this committee, thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to answering your questions and discussing the issues that matter to your constituents.