

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Warren, and Members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored and humbled by President Trump’s confidence in nominating me to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for Community Planning and Development. I would also like to thank Secretary Turner for the vision he has outlined and servant leadership he has provided for this department—I am energized and encouraged by the prospect of joining this team, should I be confirmed to this position.

As importantly, I would like to thank those who have been behind me every step of my life. From Duluth, Georgia, to Athens, to Dunwoody, to Grovetown, to Washington, D.C., I have been blessed to be supported by those who have seen the best in me and helped me cultivate it. For that I am forever grateful.

Among the many friends, family, and colleagues here today and supporting me from afar, none are more important than my parents—my father and best friend, Jerry, and my mother and hero, Sue. There are no words to capture the love you have given me, and my thanks will never be enough.

These two raised me in a working-class home in Gwinnett County, Georgia and taught me to love this country and strive to serve it. I am the first member of my family to graduate college. In my time at the University of Georgia’s School of Public and International Affairs, I came to the realization that local government is where one can affect their community most immediately. I have since spent most of the past decade serving local governments in Georgia in the field of community development—first as a City Planner in Dunwoody, a suburb in metro Atlanta, and then as the Director of Community Development in Grovetown, nestled between rural Georgia and Augusta. In these roles, I dealt directly with citizens on a daily basis, and implemented a variety of reforms to help drive their communities toward their vision.

These opportunities have taught me several valuable lessons about development in this country. First, while it is perhaps cliché, every community is different, and there is nothing more intimate and personal to a community than the nature of its housing stock. My home of Columbia County, Georgia directly borders the City of Augusta—and the vision the citizens of these two communities have for their futures are almost polar opposites. This is to say nothing about the differences between these communities and those in metro Atlanta, let alone across this vast nation of ours.

Second, government regulation, even at the smallest levels, has a way of stifling development. Many builders in Georgia, who wanted nothing more than to add affordable homes to our communities, have a story to tell about me, as a local government servant, having to shepherd them through endless, costly hoops to do so. I have spent innumerable hours of my career rewriting ill-conceived sign regulations, antiquated zoning codes, and onerous tree ordinances—and then maneuvering the time-consuming public process to get them adopted. This lost time and money leads to a simple result—less affordable homes available for hardworking Americans.

The issues the position for which I am nominated addresses—community development, disaster relief, and homelessness—are issues that manifest locally and are solved locally. Misplaced federal regulation will only serve to magnify the challenges felt at the local level.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development can empower our states and localities to solve these issues. But the current state of affairs makes clear that our old strategies have not worked. In the previous administration, housing prices skyrocketed to unfathomable levels—I watched it first hand in Georgia, as new developments ultimately took the entry price off of their signs because they could not keep up with the constant inflation. Despite the HUD budget nearly doubling over the previous four years, we nonetheless saw a record number of homeless Americans reported in the latest Point-In-Time Count released in January of this year.

Through the money it distributes, the Office of Community Planning and Development can be a catalyst for real change at the ground level. But this capacity has too long be hampered by wasteful spending, burdensome regulation, and antiquated performance metrics. I echo Secretary Turner's pledge to make HUD's use of its resources more effective and efficient—and that starts by taking inventory of what we have been doing and moving with urgency towards the outcomes we all desire.

President Trump has made clear—we need to lower the price of housing in this nation, and we need to decrease the number of homeless Americans. These goals will not be realized in DC—they will be achieved in real America, through the public, private, and nonprofit partners on the ground who know their communities and won't accept failure in their own backyard.

If confirmed, I look forward to doing the hard work necessary to ensure HUD continues to aid in creating strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.

Again, thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.