

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JENNIFER HOMENDY
MEMBER, NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE
JUNE 24, 2021**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Before I begin, I'd like to introduce my husband, Mike, and my daughter, Lexi, and thank them for their constant encouragement, guidance, and support. I would also like to recognize my parents, Sante and Nancy, my sister and brother-in-law, Erin and Richard, my brother and sister-in-law, Bryan and Katerina, and numerous friends and family, who are watching this hearing online.

I also want to thank my team – my senior advisor, Erik Strickland, and my confidential assistant, Stephen Stadius, as well as Joseph Schmoll who is here today and serves as the NTSB's Government and Industry Affairs Representative – my colleagues on the Board, Chairman Sumwalt, Vice Chairman Landsberg, Member Graham, and Member Chapman, and all the NTSB staff for their continued dedication to safety.

Finally, I want to thank each of you and your incredible staff, many of whom I'm proud to call my friends. The NTSB and this Committee have partnered over the years to address safety

gaps identified through our investigations. It has been a privilege to be a part of that partnership and I look forward to continuing its growth, should I be confirmed as Chair.

As many of you know, I have served as a Member of the NTSB since August 2018, but my passion for improving safety and for supporting the critical safety mission of the NTSB spans nearly two decades. Prior to joining the Board, from 2004 to 2018, I served as Democratic Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives. During that time, I worked closely with the NTSB and many of you and your staff to implement longstanding safety recommendations through legislation.

During my tenure on the Board, my passion for safety, for families who have lost loved ones in preventable tragedies, for our mission, for our duty to identify opportunities to improve safety for all Americans and save lives, and for our incredible workforce has grown tremendously.

I have been on-scene at accidents in many of your states– Alaska, Hawaii, Connecticut, to name a few. I have seen first-hand how hard our investigators work to determine how a crash occurred and the safety measures which, if implemented, would prevent a similar crash from re-occurring. I have worked with our transportation disaster assistance team who provide support to victims and their families following tragedies. I have worked with our safety recommendations and communications team as we share the lessons learned from our investigations and advocate for the implementation of our safety recommendations, as well as hundreds of others at the NTSB who work tirelessly to support our agency’s safety mission.

Their hard work, professionalism, and dedication is why the NTSB is so highly regarded as the world's preeminent safety agency. I am so proud to represent them as a Board Member, and I want to thank each of them for all that they do. If confirmed, I recognize how fortunate I will be to lead this agency going forward.

Like other federal agencies, COVID-19 presented challenges to our workforce and in carrying out our mission, but within a matter of days, we transitioned seamlessly to maximum telework. Shortly after the start of the pandemic, we put together a COVID Reintegration Team and implemented a comprehensive risk assessment to help guide our on-scene investigative work, with the ultimate goal of prioritizing the safety and health of our employees. Even with the challenges presented by the pandemic, our agency did not miss a beat. Our investigative staff across all the modal offices completed 1,556 investigations, decreasing our backlog by 27 percent.

Following guidance from the Office of Management and Budget, our COVID Reintegration Team is working to determine how best to safely bring back our workforce. Many of our employees have children or other loved ones who are at home with no school, summer camps, or other care options available to them. Many others care for loved ones who have health conditions that make them vulnerable to complications if exposed to COVID. Some of our workers have health conditions which put them into high-risk categories while others, including their children, have not been vaccinated. We need to be mindful of this and will be thoughtful about our approach to bringing our employees back to the workplace. Our "new normal" won't look like our old normal. However, I am confident that we will continue to carry-out our safety mission efficiently and effectively.

In the long-term, we need to begin the process for succession planning. About 30 percent of our workforce is retirement eligible. Technology is constantly evolving and being integrated into our transportation system. For these reasons, we are initiating a workforce needs assessment to evaluate our existing workload and identify our immediate gaps and future needs in resources. The assessment will help us determine what we will need 5 or 10 years down the road by evaluating industry trends and determining what resources are required, what skillsets we will need, and how we will find those resources and skills. And it is absolutely critical, as we look at our resources, that we maximize our opportunities to create a diverse and inclusive, highly-skilled workforce of the future.

Additionally, we need to continue moving forward with our efforts to reduce the length of time to complete our investigations without compromising the integrity of our investigative process, and the quality of our investigative products.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with our talented staff on all these endeavors and with each of you as you continue your great work to improve safety in all modes of transportation.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to answering your questions.