

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Hearing to Consider Nominations for the Federal Communications Commission,
June 22, 2023**

**Written Testimony of Fara Damelin
Nominee, Inspector General**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, and Members of the Committee.

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify today.

I am honored to have been nominated by the President to serve as Inspector General of the Federal Communications Commission.

Eighteen years ago, I sat in a Senate hearing room as my father-in-law, Harold Damelin, testified at his confirmation hearing to serve as Inspector General (IG) of the Department of the Treasury, a position to which he was confirmed.

I am grateful to role models like him who have inspired me throughout my career, and for the love and encouragement of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors, who have supported me.

I am happy to introduce my husband, Scott, whom I first met in the summer of 1992 when we were legal interns at the D.C. Superior Court. We have dedicated our careers to federal service, with Scott having spent nearly 20 years with the U.S. Department of Justice. But what we are most proud of is that together we raised two wonderful daughters, Leah and Rebecca.

After almost 28 years of federal service and nearly two decades in the Inspector General community, I am both humbled to be here and confident that I am prepared for this opportunity. I spent the first eight years of my federal career as an employment attorney with the Department of Health and Human Services Office of General Counsel. Since then, I have served almost 20 years in four different offices of inspector general (OIGs), gaining technical knowledge and expertise related to oversight, managing OIGs big and small, as well as leadership training and experience to prepare me for more senior-level positions.

Throughout my career, I have been drawn to agencies that administer public benefit programs to support our most vulnerable and underserved populations – protecting the integrity of research, education, housing, emergency relief, small business, and national service programs. My call to service has been driven by a recognition of the positive impact these programs can have when operating effectively, and the negative impact caused by fraud, waste, and abuse. Beyond my technical expertise, and with the support of the IG's and supervisors who invested in my professional growth, I completed leadership programs offered by OPM's Federal Executive Institute and the IG Community's Professional Development Committee, gaining important managerial and operational skills that have contributed to my success.

My record of vigorously protecting taxpayer funds and our communities from fraud, waste, and abuse; designing and implementing oversight strategies that strengthen agency programs; and leading teams that produce outstanding results, make me uniquely qualified for this position.

For over fourteen years, I served as an investigative attorney with the National Science Foundation OIG, conducting complex criminal, civil, and administrative investigations across the country in coordination with other federal and state law enforcement partners, including United States Attorneys' Offices. These cases involved complex schemes related to grant and contract fraud, public corruption, embezzlement, false claims, identity theft, and money laundering, and resulted in criminal convictions and civil settlements. Often in parallel, I proactively sought to protect future government funding and programs through administrative remedies and worked with agency officials to provide anti-fraud outreach, share fraud indicators and analytics, and offer recommendations to enhance internal controls. In addition, I actively participated in multiagency investigative working groups and initiatives to deter fraud; share data; identify new fraud schemes; design proactive plans; develop leads for new cases; and provide anti-fraud resources and training.

As Deputy IG at AmeriCorps for three and a half years, I oversaw the day-to-day audit, investigative, operational, and budgetary functions of the office, leading efforts to enhance enforcement related to fraud and public safety. I personally took on the role of OIG's Whistleblower Protection Coordinator to elevate the importance of whistleblower protections and education for our office and the agency at large. I started a legal intern program to assist with our administrative and civil matters and brought in employees on temporary details from other OIGs to help with our workload and conduct special projects. In addition, I worked with a data scientist to develop a risk model that incorporated internal and external data to proactively identify fraud risk in agency programs, allowing us to prioritize the use of limited resources most effectively.

Currently, as Chief of Staff for the Department of Housing and Urban Development OIG and a member of the Senior Executive Service, I lead a cross-functional team in executing the IG's priorities and strategic initiatives. In this role, I spearheaded the production of key oversight products, to maximize transparency around our work and help strengthen HUD's operations and critical housing and community development programs to protect the individuals and communities that they serve.

Throughout my career, I have excelled at developing collaborative relationships with stakeholders, building networks of key partners, and nurturing talent. In each office, I have been adept at engaging with the subject matter experts to quickly learn the core business functions, unique program requirements, and design and implement impactful oversight. Further, I have effectively communicated key themes and risks of complex programs to the leadership within those agencies, to the public they serve, and to other important stakeholders in furtherance of OIG's mission to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse.

I've learned first-hand about the core values, attributes, and principles that are required of all IGs and are imperative to earning and keeping the public trust:

- The need to be steadfastly independent and nonpartisan;
- To adhere to our dual reporting requirements; and
- To be scrupulously objective, thorough, and fair in performing robust oversight.

If confirmed, I would be the first Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed IG at the FCC since Congress identified the need to designate this as a Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed position in 2018. The FCC Inspector General role is more critical now than ever. In addition to its regulatory mandate, the FCC is responsible for administering tens of billions of dollars in legacy and supplemental funding programs to ensure that 100% of our nation is connected to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband for purposes of telehealth, remote work, virtual learning, public safety, and national security.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading the dedicated team at FCC OIG, and ensuring that they have the resources, training, and support they need to meet the office's mission; to keeping Congress fully informed about our oversight, in a non-partisan manner; and to working with the FCC, the Chair, and all Commissioners in a transparent manner, to learn about the challenges they face, and make recommendations to help strengthen FCC's programs and operations.

I want to thank your staff for the time they spent with me throughout this process, sharing your priorities and concerns. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing these important conversations.

In conclusion, it would be a privilege and honor to serve as Inspector General of the Federal Communications Commission. Thank you again for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to answering your questions.