

Testimony of Viqar Ahmad
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Administration and Chief Financial Officer of the
Department of Commerce
Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
December 1, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, I am honored and humbled to be here today as President Biden's nominee for the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Commerce.

I want to express my gratitude to President Biden for nominating me to this important role, and to Secretary Raimondo and Deputy Secretary Graves for their confidence in me. If I am confirmed, it would be an honor to serve as part of their leadership team.

Most importantly, I want to thank my family, especially my mother. Her boundless love, support, guidance, and grit made everything possible for my siblings and me. The love and support of my brothers, sister, nieces, and nephews has been a constant source of strength for which I am grateful. I am also appreciative of the role friends, mentors, and colleagues have played in my growth.

I never imagined that I would one day be here, as a Presidential nominee, before this Committee.

It was never my intent to embark on a career in Washington, D.C. Upon finishing my undergraduate studies at the University of Texas, the Dean of my college asked if I would be willing to go to D.C. to draft and implement a framework for an experiential semester-long learning program for fellow students. The result of this effort led to the creation of the Bill Archer Fellowship Program, which has proven wildly successful. Since 2001, more than 1,500 talented young leaders from all walks of life and background have participated in this program as they prepared for high-impact careers in the public and private sector.

I was deeply honored when former Congressman and then-House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Chairman Ralph Regula offered me a role on his staff to advise him on drafting that subcommittee's appropriations bill. He set an outstanding example of being open, listening, and treating all constituencies with respect. Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey had a strong friendship which enabled Congress to enact legislation that considerably increased funding for education, National Institutes of Health, and workforce improvement programs. I witnessed the power of amazing relationships and bipartisanship coming together to deliver for the American people.

My two decades of service in public administration and financial management leadership roles in both the Legislative and Executive Branches of government have provided me with comprehensive experience in resource planning, budgeting, internal controls, policy development, and leading and managing organizational change. I have been a key contributor in developing policies and allocating resources to successfully address the demands of our nation's most critical and rapidly shifting financial requirements, including funding for natural disasters, cybersecurity, workforce training, education, bio-medical research, and multi-billion-dollar

national security acquisitions. I have consistently cultivated and directed teams to integrate process improvements, utilize structured approaches to solve problems, and inspire staff to achieve standards of excellence.

The work done by the talented, committed, and hardworking agency staff in finance and administrative roles is rarely front stage, but it is essential to operational success. Should I be confirmed, I will lead and partner with the dedicated public servants at the Department of Commerce to effectively carry out our work.

My top priority, if confirmed, would be to help the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and other senior leadership put forth the best budget to support the Department of Commerce's strategic needs. Second, I believe we must provide evidence to Congress, the public, and our other agency partners that we are good stewards of public resources. Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to ensure our human resource focus is on recruiting, developing, and retaining a well-rounded cadre that understands not just how to do a job, but how varied functional expertise plays into the overall mission.

I am so profoundly grateful for the opportunities this country has given me. Public service has been my way of contributing to the well-being of our nation through strengthening the educational opportunities, healthcare, workforce investment, and safety and security of our homeland. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing our common mission to build a stronger American economy.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before this Committee. I look forward to your questions.