

Statement of Robert E. Primus
Nominee to become a Member of the Surface Transportation Board
Before the
United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
September 7, 2022

Chairman Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you this morning to discuss my desire to serve a second and full five-year term as a member of the Surface Transportation Board. I remain humbled and extremely grateful to this Committee for supporting my initial nomination and subsequent confirmation in 2020, and I hope that you will look favorably upon my pending renomination.

Some say the second time around is usually a better experience than the first. Time will tell if this is true, but I can certainly attest to the theory as it relates to my family. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not allowed to have my family present with me when I came before this Committee. Today, I am very happy to be joined by the entire Team Primus - my amazing wife Gladys and our incredible sons, Benjamin, Jacob, and Aaron Francis. I would not be where I am today without their love and support and hopefully, after today, the boys will think their dad is pretty cool.

Madam Chair and Ranking Member Wicker, there are many reasons why I am seeking to serve a second term. Chief among them is my desire to continue working on the diverse portfolio of issues currently before the Agency that have broad and lasting implications for the nation's rail network and our national economy. This includes the Board's efforts to address the nationwide deterioration of service levels, which has negatively impacted numerous business sectors and further strained our national supply chain; and establishing formal plans, in compliance with the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, to address the on-time performance challenges that have long plagued Amtrak's regional and long-distance routes.

I would also welcome the opportunity to continue working with the various stakeholders that have a vested interest in maintaining the strongest possible rail network. This would include representatives associated with Class I, II and III railroads; Amtrak; the shipping community, which is comprised of thousands of businesses, large and small, representing every part of our economy; the general public, who may be directly impacted by freight and passenger rail service; and the dedicated men and women who comprise our nation's rail labor force. Stakeholder input has been absolutely critical in my efforts to better understand the complex and deep seeded problems that are often brought before the Board. Our ability to develop workable solutions would be virtually impossible without their insight and contributions.

Finally, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Wicker, I am seeking renomination so that I might have the opportunity to continue working with an amazing group of public servants dedicated to ensuring our national rail network is reliable, resilient, balanced, and competitive. It has been a great honor serving alongside the incomparable Board staff in addition to Marty Oberman,

Patrick Fuchs, Michelle Schultz and Karen Hedlund. Mutual respect and an appreciation of differing viewpoints is refreshingly the norm, and there is a genuine camaraderie that has allowed the Board to successfully navigate some very difficult issues. And, in the rare instance when we don't all agree on the path forward, we have always respectfully disagreed without being disagreeable and divisive. That is very hard to find these days, and I strongly believe our national rail network and the country are better for it.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.