

**Testimony of Dr. Lanhee Chen**  
**Nominee to the Amtrak Board of Directors**  
**United States Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee**  
**Hearing on Nominations, September 25, 2024**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz and members of the committee: My name is Lanhee Chen, and I am honored to appear before you today as a nominee for the Amtrak Board of Directors.

I was born in North Carolina, grew up in Southern California, and now live in the San Francisco Bay Area. I have spent my career at the intersection of business, government, and public policy, and believe this experience will bring much needed perspective to the Amtrak Board. Today, I am a Fellow at the Hoover Institution, teach at Stanford University, and am a partner at the Brunswick Group, a global business advisory firm.

I have significant experience as a board member in corporate, nonprofit, and government settings. For example, I have served since 2015 on the board of El Camino Health, a community-based healthcare system in Northern California. I chaired the board for five years, currently chair its governance committee, and formerly chaired both the audit and executive compensation committees. I was nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board from 2014 to 2018, which provides counsel on the Social Security program to policymakers in Congress and beyond.

My interest in passenger trains began when I was a young boy. I would visit the Fullerton, California railroad station with my dad to see the Amtrak trains that stop there. We scoured local hobby shops for model Amtrak locomotives and coaches, which I proudly displayed in my room or sometimes got to run on tracks which took over our entire living room.

I am fortunate to still live in California, which has frequent Amtrak service along multiple corridors that link many of its major metropolitan areas and smaller communities in

between, thanks largely to past state investments. I have been a passenger on Amtrak's state-supported routes in California, like the *Pacific Surfliner* and the *Capitol Corridor*, and on trains along the Northeast Corridor. I believe that Congress clearly intended to have more representation from the National Network on the Amtrak Board and, as a Californian, I look forward to helping realize that goal.

There are several things I believe I would bring to the Amtrak Board if confirmed. The first is Board experience in a quasi-public setting. The health system board on which I have served for nearly a decade has both fiduciary responsibilities and a public mission. That is also true of Amtrak, which by law is directed both to operate like a business and to provide passenger rail service that may not produce financial returns, but benefits the travelers and communities it serves, particularly those without other transportation options. Balancing financial prudence and a public mission is not an unfamiliar concept to me.

I also have significant business experience. I have furnished counsel to corporate leaders on strategic and reputational concerns; evaluated and recommended investments in early-stage companies; and advised businesses as they navigate the marketplace and consider the impacts of regulation and policy on their work.

Finally, I have familiarity with both federal and state policy issues, including infrastructure and publicly-funded programs, as a result of my service on the Social Security Advisory Board; my work as a policy advisor to four presidential campaigns; my candidacy for the position of California state controller, my state's chief fiscal officer; and from my work in academia, at one of America's leading research institutes.

From my board service, I recognize that one of the most important responsibilities of any Director is to ensure that management is accountable for results. That obligation is heightened

for organizations like Amtrak, which receives government funding intended to benefit the American people. This accountability must extend beyond the Board, to Amtrak's customers, employees, taxpayers, and the elected officials like you, who approve its funding. Amtrak's Board has a responsibility not only to ensure that the taxpayer dollars the organization receives are well spent, but also to emphasize the importance of maintaining high standards of safety, timeliness, and customer service, and to help formulate a strategy to increase revenues, so that more funding is available for services and investments that fulfill the organization's mission. If confirmed to the Amtrak board, I will work to ensure that Amtrak does business transparently; operates in a fiscally responsible manner; and serves the needs of the passengers who ride its trains and the states that provide funding both for daily service and longer-term capital investments.

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