

**Statement of Maria E. Brewer**  
**Nominee to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Kingdom of**  
**Lesotho**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**June 9, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee:

It is an honor to appear before you as you consider my nomination as U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho. I want to thank President Biden for this opportunity and for the trust that he and Secretary Blinken have in my ability to serve our country again as U.S. ambassador. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating with this committee as we advance U.S. foreign policy objectives in Lesotho. I am honored and fortunate to have my husband, Mark, and our twelve-year-old daughter, Arina, here with me today. I thank them for their constant love and support, along with my parents, William and Maria Pallick, who are watching from their home in Texas.

Having served nearly 25 years with the U.S. Department of State, I have substantial experience working on African affairs, most recently as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone. My experience has taught me the need to develop diverse teams that reflect the country we serve and to foster high morale in challenging environments. If confirmed, I will draw upon this wealth of knowledge and management experience to pursue U.S. goals and to protect U.S. interests in Lesotho.

Promoting democratic governance is at the core of U.S. values and of what we seek to accomplish in Lesotho. As Secretary Blinken noted, “strong democracies are more stable, better partners to us, more committed to human rights, less prone to conflict, and more dependable markets for our goods and services.” Along with its Southern African Development Community partners, Lesotho seeks to implement reforms to reduce political instability, strengthen its institutions, and professionalize its military. Our embassy has already made great strides in promoting the rule of law, civilian control of Lesotho’s military, and government accountability. If confirmed, I will collaborate with this committee, the interagency, and the Government of Lesotho to strengthen Lesotho’s institutions, to reinforce its ability to meet the needs of its people, and to build its capacity to be a better partner to us.

The last year taught every country that promoting the health of its people is a core imperative. In Lesotho, health system strengthening is at the center of our assistance efforts. With one in four adults living with HIV/AIDS and many more children orphaned by it, shoring up Lesotho’s capacity to confront HIV/AIDS will remain a critical component to U.S. engagement. PEPFAR, which Congress generously funds, has transformed Lesotho, which was one of the first countries to reach epidemic control, surpassing UNAIDS targets and cutting new infections by half. Our health partnerships have also bolstered Lesotho’s capacity to confront COVID-19. Curbing the spread of these pandemics in Lesotho contributes to global health security which benefits Americans at home. If confirmed, I will seek to sustain momentum in these areas.

To increase internal stability and its ability to be an effective partner, Lesotho needs economic development. AGOA—the African Growth and Opportunity Act—revolutionized Lesotho’s economy, creating over 45,000 private sector jobs in Lesotho, making it the second largest sub-Saharan supplier of textiles and apparel to the United States. Nevertheless, there is still important progress to be made, particularly improving work conditions and preparing Lesotho for its post-AGOA future once the Act expires in 2025. I will work diligently to support economic diversification, continued progress on AGOA eligibility criteria, and overall improvement of the business climate, if confirmed. Doing so not only improves the lives of Basotho, but also improves conditions for U.S. companies seeking to do business with Lesotho.

The Department of State in 2020 ranked Lesotho among the countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and which are not making significant efforts to comply. The Department has worked assiduously with the Government of Lesotho to urge it to devote resources to combatting trafficking in persons. Lesotho and its people are receptive to this message and making real progress. If confirmed, I will commit to pushing Lesotho for increased prevention and prosecution of these crimes and increased protection for victims.

In addition to these policy aims, I hold paramount the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Lesotho, and the entire U.S. Embassy team, including U.S. citizen employees, their families, and our Basotho colleagues. If confirmed, I would do all within my power to ensure the security of our Mission and oversee its operations.

In closing, I would like to thank you all again for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I would welcome the challenge and privilege of protecting and advancing U.S. interests in Maseru as the U.S. ambassador. I look forward to any questions you may have.