

**Statement of Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat  
Nominee to be Director General of the Foreign Service and  
Director of Global Talent Management  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
September 15, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I sincerely thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Global Talent Management.

If confirmed, I will work with the Members of this Committee to build a workforce better able to confront the breadth and depth of challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Supporting the more than 76,000 women and men who make up our diverse, global team will be the highest privilege of my four-decade career. I am inspired by the women and men who so dutifully serve our nation, too often in harm's way. They deserve our full support and their welfare will be my north star.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to acknowledge my Aunt and Uncle Blanche and Robert Stephens, the matriarch and patriarch of our family, my sister and brother-in-law Kathryn and Luther White and brother and sister-in-law Rodney and Cindy Bloom. I'd also like to thank my sons, Sumit Nicolaus and Sunil Christopher, and their father Olivier, who hold a special place in my heart in no small part for having shared this Foreign Service journey with me across the globe.

As Secretary Blinken noted when he came before this Committee, when America does not lead on the global stage others who do not necessarily have our best interests in mind fill the void, or the challenges simply go unaddressed. In order to lead with diplomacy, we need a strong State Department.

Our team has been tested in unprecedented ways over the last 20 months, most recently mobilizing to evacuate more than 123,000 people, including 6,000 U.S. citizens and 2,800 Locally Employed Staff from Afghanistan, one of the largest non-combatant evacuations in U.S. history. This effort was preceded, in the wake of the COVID pandemic, by coordinating the repatriation of 101,386 Americans from 136 countries and territories in less than six months.

A 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce must reflect our diverse nation. If confirmed, I will prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility so the Department is fully representative of the American people and is a workplace where every employee is treated with dignity and respect and has an equal opportunity for professional development and promotion. I look forward to working with Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley, the Department's first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, to ensure the initiatives she leads are embedded at every level of the organization.

Mr. Chairman, over the past 20 months we have adapted to unprecedented circumstances. At State we are building on that experience to invest in a workforce that is more mobile, agile and expeditionary; especially one that gets outside capitals more often to directly engage local communities. The virtual world also provides new tools for outreach. Our national network successfully recruited record numbers of outstanding, diverse candidates for the Pickering, Rangel, and Foreign Affairs IT Fellowships, and pursued ambitious efforts focused on diversity for career candidates. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management to ensure we are prepared to return to the workplace while taking full advantage of a more hybrid workforce and environment.

We will also need to build a broader knowledge set to meet the challenges and benefits from the opportunities our nation faces -- from preventing the next pandemic, harnessing the full potential of emerging technologies and addressing climate change, to strengthening our alliances and countering our adversaries. Our diversity as a nation gives us strategic advantages. By seeking the best talent, most creative minds, and our fellow citizens' rich and varied experiences and backgrounds, State is better able to advance America's security, interests, values, and commitment to democracy. In our diversity we embody the values to which our nation aspires, inspire Americans to pursue a life of service and give young people across the globe hope for a better future.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work to strengthen accountability, empowering employees to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and assume responsibility for their decisions. And I will endeavor to make healing central to all my efforts -- from a pandemic that robbed us of too many colleagues and family members; from the withdrawal from Afghanistan, where so many of our employees served over the past two decades; and from the racial and social strife that has rocked our country and our workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today. I look forward to your questions.