

Statement of N. Nick Perry
Nominee for United States Ambassador to Jamaica
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

February 8, 2022

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee today. I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Jamaica. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senate Majority Leader Schumer for his steadfast support and express my appreciation for the encouragement I have received from others within New York's Congressional delegation. I am grateful to appear before you today accompanied by my wife - Joyce; my children - Novalie and Nickolas Alexander; and my granddaughter - Justine.

This continuation of my lifelong journey of public service is deeply personal to me. I was born and raised in Jamaica in a family of eleven children. After attending and graduating from secondary school, I worked for the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union briefly before moving to the United States in the summer of 1971. My career in public service began soon after my arrival. I volunteered for the selective service, was drafted into the U.S. Army, and served for two years of active duty - including a yearlong deployment to South Korea - and four years on reserve status before being honorably discharged. I attended Brooklyn College on the G.I. Bill, graduating with a B.A. in Political Science, and later studied for an M.A. in Public Policy and Administration. After college, I got involved with community organizing, was appointed to the local Community Board, and eventually was elected to five consecutive terms as Chairman of that Board. As Community Board Chair, I concurrently served five consecutive terms on the Brooklyn Borough Board before being elected to the New York State Assembly in 1992, where I have served for nearly 30 years and currently serve as the Assistant Speaker Pro Tempore.

I have dedicated my career in public service working across diverse communities to build consensus on issues of social importance. If confirmed, I believe my experience and perspective as a state legislator for almost 30 years, complemented by my background as an American who was born and raised in Jamaica for the first 20 years of my life, could contribute positively to strengthening the United States' partnership with Jamaica.

As the safety and security of Americans abroad is the State Department's top priority, if confirmed, I pledge to fulfill my responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of all U.S. citizens, including supporting the security of U.S. citizens living in or traveling to Jamaica. I pledge to also coordinate closely with U.S. law enforcement agencies and Jamaican counterparts to address the threats posed by transnational criminal organizations, drug trafficking, and human trafficking, including through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

The United States is leading the world in the fight against COVID-19 by donating more vaccines than all other countries combined. Recognizing the severe impact of the pandemic on Jamaica, if confirmed, I will ensure we continue U.S. backing to address Jamaica's COVID-19 public health related challenges, and to help Jamaica recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic

As the world looks to create an equitable clean energy future and millions of good-paying jobs, if confirmed, I will also work to support innovative U.S. engagement with Jamaica in promoting renewable energy sources to help stabilize electricity costs and promote a reliable, resilient, and low-carbon power grid to assist the country's development.

Recognizing Jamaica's vulnerability to the effects of the climate crisis, including extreme weather events like hurricanes, storms, and flooding, I commit to continue working with Jamaica to strengthen its preparedness for and resilience to such climate and severe weather impacts.

I understand Jamaica has one of the highest rates of HIV in the Caribbean. If confirmed, I will advance the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and work with government and civil society to support the timely diagnosis and treatment of persons living with HIV.

If confirmed, I will also work closely with the Jamaican government to promote and protect fundamental freedoms and human rights, including for members of the LGBTQIA+ community and to combat gender-based violence, and to make tangible progress in fighting trafficking in persons.

Finally, if confirmed, I pledge to make myself available to this Committee, its Members, and staff to seek your advice and guidance where appropriate.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for your time and your consideration. I look forward to your questions.