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Nominee for Assistant Administrator for Asia Bureau,
United States Agency for International Development

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds. I have to say, it is a much less pleasant feeling to be on this side of the dais than the one that I am accustomed to, sitting behind you. I am deeply humbled and honored to come before the Committee today as the nominee to serve as Assistant Administrator of the Asia Bureau at USAID, and by the trust placed in me by President Biden and Administrator Power.

If confirmed, I will seek to contribute to USAID's efforts to build an enduring US diplomatic and development presence in the Indo-Pacific, the most strategically vital region of the globe. And I am honored to be here today seeking your trust to join with the dedicated staff of the USAID to undertake this important work on behalf of the American people.

I am joined by my former wife Wendy Wasserman and my daughter, Josie. My partner, Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, and her son, Adrian, are not able to join me today, but Stephanie's wisdom has contributed much to make me capable of the challenge I seek your advice and consent to undertake - and I owe her a debt that can never be repaid. So too my mother and sister, and my father, who is no longer with us - and whose ethical and moral teachings are my lodestar.

I also want to express my appreciation for the support that Chairman Menendez has provided me over the years. His tireless commitment to building a nation and a world consistent with our highest values - even at times when those values have been uniquely stressed both at home and abroad - has been nothing short of inspirational

And last, but certainly not least, I want to express my thanks to all the Members and staff of this Committee that I have served with for the past decade. You know how strongly I believe in the work of this Committee and how torn I am to leave. If confirmed, I give you my pledge to work with you in genuine consultation and partnership, and I trust that you will keep me honest should I falter.

As we face the challenges of the twenty-first century - including the realities of strategic competition with China -- I can think of few undertakings more important than extending USAID's mission to drive sustainable and inclusive development, regional prosperity, and stability in the Asia Region. It is central to our U.S. national interest to help to meet the region's humanitarian needs, contribute to a free and open regional architecture, and work with the people and governments of the region to safeguard their sovereignty, build vital civil societies and to promote democratic governance, confront human rights violations, and to combat gender inequality, corruption and kleptocracy.

And, as I know the Members of this Committee appreciate, we do this work not just because it is the right thing to do – although it is certainly that – but because working alongside allies and partners in the region to build a more capable and connected Indo-Pacific community is vital for American security and prosperity and benefits American workers and families.

As the President’s Indo-Pacific Strategy states, “the United States has long recognized the Indo-Pacific as vital to our security and prosperity,” and we have pursued partnership in the region since our very founding as a nation.

There is no shortage of challenges in the region: climate change poses an existential threat across Asia, from Pacific Island countries threatened with rising tides to the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau. More than 300 million still live in extreme poverty, and food insecurity threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions. Unmet basic education and healthcare needs, democratic backsliding, and immense infrastructure requirements are a few of the challenges that the region faces.

But just as there is no shortage of challenges, so too there is also no shortage of opportunities to foster deeper local partnerships, greater innovation through localization, and more meaningful results to drive development progress, not simply development programs.

If confirmed, I look forward to pursuing opportunities to work with our partners, particularly in the Pacific, on climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and resilience, and a sustainable future; as well as opportunities to enable high-quality development finance and public-private partnerships to further the President’s Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. Equally important will be furthering good governance, anti-corruption, human rights and supporting civil society actors in the region. We can do this by building deeper relationships with our development partners like the Quad so together we are more efficient and effective in meeting regional needs. Likewise, we can strengthen partnerships with our ASEAN partners to build real functional problem solving architecture.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to any questions that you may have.