

**Statement of Barbera Hale Thornhill
Nominee to be Ambassador to Singapore
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 5, 2020**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee. It is my honor and privilege to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to Singapore. I am grateful for the faith and confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have shown in me.

If I may, I would like to introduce my family and friends with me here today. My son Hale, my new daughter Kelly, Oddie Nwobi, who is like a second son to me, my cousins Fred and Fabian Thornhill, and my long-time friends and colleagues Evelyn Mangilet and Rosie Segal.

Let me share a little about my background. I come from a loving family in North Carolina long-known for its involvement in healthcare and charitable work. My mother, a pediatrician, was one of the first women to go to Duke Medical School and my father, an ENT, invented the procedure known as "Stapedectomy," an operation that led to the Cochlear implant – a device that has helped hundreds of thousands of people hear again. But more than his skill as a surgeon, it was my father's commitment to treating underserved people and providing them with blessings that we so often take for granted that inspires me even now, and motivates me every day.

My professional calling has not been medicine, however, but creating and succeeding in business. While at George Washington University, I started an importing company selling grasscloth and silk wallcovering from Korea and Japan to hotels and stores. The success of my first company led me to expand and create a design firm which managed many complex projects from the Narita Hotel in Japan, to world clubs at Tokyo airport, to Disney's 5-star Mira Costa Hotel in Hong Kong. These were multi-complex jobs around the world in Japan, China, England, and Saudi Arabia. I believe I learned much from these experiences about fostering inclusion and crossing cultural divides that will be useful if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as Ambassador.

My professionalism and respect for other cultures allowed me to overcome challenges and differences in order to successfully complete ventures in accordance with the highest business and personal standards. I believe that my personal and business background would serve me well should I be confirmed as Ambassador to Singapore – a country with a remarkable record of entrepreneurship and business success and the potential for an even brighter future.

As you know, for more than half a century, the United States and Singapore have forged an enduring relationship based on four essential elements: (1) mutual economic interests, (2) defense cooperation, (3) a vigorous commitment to security, and (4) ongoing people-to-people ties. Both countries respect the rule of law and have many shared values – including diversity, transparency, meritocracy, and innovation. Together we have partnered to address global threats and challenges including terrorism, transnational crimes, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. So it is no surprise that the United States and Singapore have collaborated in our efforts to counter and stop the spread of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Singapore has experienced a significant number of confirmed COVID-19 infections per capita compared to many of its Southeast Asian neighbors. In the face of this challenge, Singapore has been very responsive and transparent with its efforts to counter the spread of corona-

virus since the outbreak began in late January. The government has taken aggressive and proactive measures to reduce the spread of this virus, including by implementing robust detection, testing, surveillance, and contact monitoring procedures. U.S. and Singaporean entities have come together to address this crisis. For instance, a U.S.-based pharmaceutical company is currently working with the joint medical school founded by the National University of Singapore and Duke University to develop a vaccine. Our governments have also exchanged information on best practices and discussed ways to keep medical supply chains open, including for personal protective equipment. Through such coordination, the United States and Singapore have worked closely through the COVID-19 crisis.

Singapore is a vital economic partner for the United States. The first bilateral Free Trade Agreement the United States signed with an Asian country was with Singapore. From the day the bilateral Free Trade Agreement entered into force in January 2004, the United States has had a trade surplus in goods and services. In 2018 that surplus totaled more than \$18 billion. There are more than 4,500 American companies in Singapore and the United States has invested more than \$200 billion dollars in Singapore. We are Singapore's largest trading partner in services, and the two-way trade of goods and services between Singapore and the United States reached more than \$90 billion in 2018. More importantly, the robust trade relationship has supported over 200,000 jobs in the United States.

Singapore, this amazing city-state, is only 3.5 times the size of Washington, D.C., but one of America's strongest defense partners in the region. This bilateral defense partnership bedrock is built on the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding, the 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement, and the enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement of 2015 which allows U.S. military access to Singapore bases, airfields, and ports. We have an \$8.1B active Foreign Military Sales portfolio with Singapore. Singapore also decided to purchase four F35B fighters. Singapore has the largest permanent foreign military training presence in the continental United States, with more than 1,000 Singapore Armed Forces personnel training at any one time. President Trump made it crystal clear that Singapore is a priority for our country by signing the renewal of the 1990 MOU with Prime Minister Lee in 2019, and Secretary of Defense Esper and the Singaporean Ministry of Defense signed an MOU in December last year, allowing Singaporean Air Force fighters to have a training facility in Guam.

The United States and Singapore have benefited from a robust law enforcement and homeland security partnership that strengthens the security of our citizens, our companies, and our nations by addressing challenges including cybercrime, cybersecurity, and financial technology. The United States works with our very capable partner Singapore on digital economy, smart cities, responsible and secure 5G implementations, and supporting the free but secure flows of data...to strengthen our security cooperation, a third essential element.

Finally, the fourth essential element of our relationship, our people-to-people ties, such as educational exchanges and other public diplomacy programs, remain important. Focus on human rights is especially near and dear to my heart. Let me tell you a bit why that is so important to me.

I had the honor to work with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994, lending an American heart and hands to their important work with children in orphanages, ailing homebound families, and to the destitute and dying in the hospice known as the "Home of the Pure Heart."

I participated in Operation Smile missions in Vietnam, Brazil, and China and elsewhere. These missions gave me an opportunity to see how one operation, one \$250 operation could change a life, a family, and a village.

In the United States I worked extensively with Scouts BSA formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America that has provided leadership and mentored youths to help them climb the ladder of personal achievement and prepare them for life struggles and challenges. This program has changed over 20,000 underprivileged adolescents.

I also worked with the Children's Institute in Los Angeles to help provide basic needs, early childhood education, psychological counseling, personal encouragement, and love for over 28,000 children who have been abused and have suffered many other horrible traumas.

My social work experience motivates my interest in addressing human rights and in particular human trafficking. Singapore has made significant strides in the fight against trafficking in recent years, including by expanding some protections within migrant labor recruitment systems and work conditions, and by identifying a higher number of victims. In November 2019, Singapore saw its first conviction of a labor trafficking case under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act. Recognizing Singapore has moved from Tier 2 to Tier 1 in our annual anti-trafficking report, if confirmed, I will work closely with Singapore to encourage the Singaporeans to put even greater emphasis on this issue. I will work tirelessly on this effort.

The U.S.-Singapore bilateral relationship serves as one of our most important partnerships in the region...a relationship we should embrace and treasure. Thanks to our shared values and long history of cooperation, we work closely with Singapore on shared regional security and economic objectives. Cooperation ranges from providing capacity-building programs to ASEAN countries to reinforcing international law in the maritime domain.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as Ambassador, I promise you that I will be a steward of all aspects of the relationship, including with these four essential elements - trade, defense, security, and people-to-people programs. I will be a vocal proponent for the United States, our views on inclusiveness, and our support for democracy and for one of our most important, cherished partners in the world - Singapore.

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Menendez, and, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today and giving my nomination your serious consideration.

I am pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.