

Statement of Angela Price Aggeler
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 28, 2022

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is the honor of my Foreign Service career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia. I am humbled by and grateful for the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to represent the United States in Skopje. I hope to also earn your trust, and if confirmed, would work closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in North Macedonia.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my husband, Brian, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, and the Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Paris. I would not be here today were it not for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Madeleine, who has come from Austin, Texas, to have my back today, as always. I began my foreign service career in 1998 and have served in Pakistan, Vietnam, France, and India. I am also no stranger to North Macedonia. I served as Counselor for Public Affairs in Skopje, where I focused on educating and empowering youth and minority communities, good governance, and building a stronger economy and more tolerant society. I would be deeply honored to return to Skopje to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to North Macedonia and to advance our priorities with this important strategic partner.

NATO's newest Ally, North Macedonia, will also assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023. We must continue to work closely with North Macedonia in responding to the threats posed to our security and the international order, most immediately Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The urgency of this moment underscores the importance of deeper political, economic, cultural, security cooperation, and people-to-people ties with North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries as they work to realize their strategic goals of Western integration.

The United States has supported North Macedonia's longstanding goal of EU accession. We stand firmly behind the EU enlargement process because it has advanced democratic development and promoted peace, stability, and prosperity on the European continent, building stronger strategic partners for the United States. North Macedonia has overcome difficult challenges and made tough choices to

take historic steps forward on its accession path. If confirmed, I will build on these successes to secure the EU accession path of North Macedonia.

The United States and North Macedonia have many shared priorities, including fighting corruption, improving the rule of law, and strengthening good governance. If confirmed, I will encourage judicial reforms and urge the institutions of North Macedonia to promote transparency, investigate allegations of abuse, and decisively counter corruption to bolster public confidence in governance. I will work with interagency partners to help North Macedonia develop a national strategy that effectively holds corrupt actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will work to support North Macedonia's economic future through policies to bolster its investment climate, strengthen infrastructure, improve energy diversity and security, and build resilience to malign external influence, including from Russia and China. I will work to advance the country's integration into regional economic growth initiatives based on EU standards, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. I will support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia needs to diversify energy sources and routes and develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets. If confirmed, I will champion the country's transition from coal towards cleaner alternatives and create the market conditions that attract American investment that will and spur North Macedonia to become a regional energy hub.

Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the positive momentum of June's bilateral Strategic Dialogue, which touched on a range of issues, including deepening military-to-military cooperation.

It would be an honor to lead our Embassy Skopje team and work with the government, citizens, and our international partners on these priorities. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions.