

United States Senate Committee on Finance  
Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB) Nomination Hearing

Sharon B. Lewis

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Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and for your consideration of my nomination.

I am honored to have been nominated by the President for this important role as a member of the Social Security Advisory Board. I appreciate the opportunity to join my two colleagues, Ms. Lang and Mr. Biggs, to sit before you and answer your questions. If we are all confirmed, I look forward to joining this Board with a full complement of seven members to share ideas, to listen to multiple views, and to work together to identify and communicate recommendations for the Social Security Administration (SSA).

I also want to thank my family, especially my parents, my brother and my sister, and my three amazing daughters – Jazmin, Zoe, and Maraena – for their love, support, encouragement and patience, without which I would not be here. Zoe asked me to tell you hello from Oregon, noting her disappointment in not being able to join me in DC this week, but also pride in her job responsibilities that kept her at home. Zoe is one of the very small proportion of Supplemental Security Income recipients with intellectual disabilities who work in competitive, integrated employment. I am also grateful to acknowledge Maraena, my youngest daughter, who is here to support me today.

I believe I have a unique combination of personal and professional experience that will inform my work on the Board. My professional background includes serving in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as the Commissioner of the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Principal Deputy Administrator of the Administration for Community Living, and the Secretary's Senior Advisor on Disability Policy. While at HHS, I worked collaboratively with teams from the Social Security Administration, the Department of Labor, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to support improved employment outcomes and economic opportunity for people with disabilities. Prior to joining HHS, I also served as the Senior Disability Policy Advisor for the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, and as a Joseph P. Kennedy Public Policy Fellow for the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families within the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

Since leaving full-time government service eight years ago, I have been employed with a health care consulting firm, Health Management Associates. As a consultant, I primarily work with state Medicaid agencies and with other stakeholders to improve policies and programs for

people with disabilities and older adults, and their families. Additionally, I continue to volunteer with several non-profit disability-focused organizations.

Regarding my personal experience, as mom to a young adult with significant disabilities, as family to several retired older adults, and through my engagement with many people in the disability community over the past 25 years, I know firsthand both the opportunities and challenges for those who depend upon the important benefits administered by Social Security.

I think understanding and respecting the experiences of both the beneficiaries who receive services, and the staff who deliver those services, is central to the Social Security Advisory Board's work. Hearing from these individuals, and infusing their insights into policy deliberations and recommendations, reminds us why it is so important to improve and sustain Social Security programs. It is our obligation to thoughtfully consider the experiences of everyday Americans alongside our efforts to analyze and consider data, research and the perspectives of government officials, policy experts, economists and social scientists.

I also believe strongly in compromise and pursuing consensus. Should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed, I will serve in a collaborative and bipartisan manner. I will work cooperatively with my fellow Board members in developing our advice and guidance to the Social Security Administration.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the Committee, for the privilege of appearing before you today. I look forward to responding to your questions.