

Opening Statement
United States Senate
Committee on Finance
Jason J. Fichtner, PhD¹

Nominee to be a Member of the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB)

February 5, 2020

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Wyden, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Jason Fichtner, and I am a Senior Lecturer of International Economics and Associate Director of the Masters of International Economics and Finance (MIEF) program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). I am also a Fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) and on the Board of Directors of the National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI). All opinions I express today are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employers or any other organization or person.

I want to thank the President for nominating me to serve as a Member of the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB). Over a decade ago, I was privileged to serve in several positions at the Social Security Administration, including as the Acting Principal Deputy Commissioner of Social Security. In that capacity, I worked with the Congress, the White House, the Social Security Advisory Board, stakeholders, and the public to support the vital programs administered by the Social Security Administration and improve the service the organization provides. I was also the Secretary to the Social Security Board of Trustees. Additionally, I was instrumental in improving the Administration's communication materials to the public, including "When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits," a publication that informs people how Social Security benefits fit into their retirement decision and that is still used today.

I believe that my educational and professional experiences make me an ideal candidate to serve on this Board. With respect to my education, I received my undergraduate degree from the University

¹ The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other person or organization.

of Michigan, my Master's degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University, and my PhD in Public Administration and Policy from Virginia Tech. Professionally, along with my previous service at the Social Security Administration, I've worked as an Economist for the Internal Revenue Service and as a Senior Economist for the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress.

I have a long record of published research on issues related to Social Security's retirement and disability programs, as well as retirement security in general. I also have a long history of working in a bipartisan manner, bringing people together to discuss, deliberate and address the challenges facing the Social Security Administration and the vital programs it administers. The Social Security Advisory Board makes recommendations to the President, the Congress and the public that, among other things, will ensure the quality of service delivery that the Social Security Administration provides, including increasing the public's understanding of program benefits.

The heart of any organization is its employees, those that work tirelessly every day to fulfil the mission and deliver quality services. One of the accomplishments of which I am most proud from my tenure at the Social Security Administration was getting to know the employees of the agency, many of whom I remain in contact with to this day. It is a truly a great privilege to once again be asked to serve the public and work with those at the Social Security Administration.

The Social Security Advisory Board plays an important role in advising how our nation's important social insurance programs can be improved and strengthened, and providing advice and guidance to the Social Security Administration on ways to improve the administration of these valuable programs. Should I be confirmed as a Member of the Social Security Advisory Board, I pledge to continue working in a bipartisan manner to ensure that our nation's social security programs provide the best possible service to the public.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today and I would be happy to answer any questions.