

TESTIMONY OF MELANIE ANN EGORIN  
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
JUNE 24, 2021

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Legislation. And thank you Chairman Neal for the gracious introduction.

It is my honor to be nominated by President Biden to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the Department of Health and Human Services under Secretary Becerra.

As someone who has worked for the Federal Government – on Capitol Hill and at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) – for more than 15 years, it is especially humbling to sit before you today.

I approach this position and our conversation today with humility and a continued commitment to serving the American people.

I am the daughter of a physician-scientist who brought his collaborators home for dinner and his children to academic meetings. I grew up surrounded by my father, his colleagues, and students working to understand and treat cancer. They never forgot that each data point in their research was a person with loved ones also impacted by the disease.

When I began my own career working with women with HIV, I saw how researchers and stakeholders used evidence grounded in the patient experience to advance policy and address health equity. My commitment to this approach and these issues is what brought me to federal service and what remains the core principle behind my career.

Throughout my 25-year career in health policy, the people helped and hurt by the health care system are my cornerstone. My student working to complete his undergraduate degree while caring for his elderly grandparents; the nurse visiting Medicare beneficiaries to make their homes safe; the patient diagnosed with end-stage renal disease at 23 while serving in the Army; the 15-

year-old boy with a pre-existing condition and his mother advocating to make sure his treatments are covered by insurance; and the coal mine workers on the precipice of losing their health coverage. I carry their voices with me and remember their stories while I do my work.

The role of Assistant Secretary for Legislation is a unique intersection of responsiveness and collaboration between the executive and legislative branches of government. Throughout my career at GAO and in Congress, I have seen firsthand how important this role is. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I will bring my breadth and depth of policy knowledge and experience to be transparent and accountable as Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the Department of Health and Human Services.

I approach policy development and implementation from a pragmatic position that is filled with hope and the belief that we can do better. From my experience at GAO, and in my work at the Committee on Ways and Means, I understand the importance of taking a bi-partisan, bi-cameral approach to policy making. I recognize the importance of asking questions about current policies and programs to build on them and improve the health of the nation, and our health care system.

I want to thank Chairman Neal, Members of the Ways and Means Committee, and the numerous Representatives and Senators who have allowed me to work on their behalf, and with their staff, to craft policies that make our health care system better – in very large but also very small ways.

I understand and believe that successful bi-partisan solutions help people. My colleagues – the current and former Hill staff with whom I have worked across the aisle and across the Capitol – thank you for working with me. We may not always agree on policy specifics, but we have consistently found ways to move forward on behalf of the American people. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work with Members and their staff in this collaborative manner.

The Department of Health and Human Services faces a broad range of challenges from expanding health coverage, to caring for our children and seniors, to supporting innovation and scientific advancement, to responding to and recovering from COVID-19, which exposed many inequities I have worked to address throughout my career. I appreciate the opportunity that this

Administration has to work with Congress to tackle these challenges in a meaningful way. Given the impact the Department has on the Nation's health and economy, if confirmed, I look forward to continuing to serve the American people.

As I conclude my testimony, I want to thank my spouse, Brian Tarleton, for building a life together that honors what is important to both of us, and our children, Atticus and Lorelei, for challenging me and forcing me to think about new ideas every day.

My mother, Karen Egorin-Yaker, and my late father, Merrill Jon Egorin, would often admonish me and my brother that our actions reflect our upbringing. I hope my actions to date, and if I am confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, reflect their strong belief in valuing diversity of thought and experience in solving problems as well as using one's knowledge, heart, and hard work to make the world better.

Senators, I am happy to answer your questions today and, if confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the Department of Health and Human Services, for many years in the future.