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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on the Nominations of Sarah Bianchi and Jayme White to USTR, Melanie Egorin to HHS
As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee meets to discuss three nominations for important roles in the Biden administration.

Dr. Melanie Egorin is nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Legislation at HHS. There aren't many people out there who know more about America's federal health programs than Dr. Egorin does, particularly Medicare. Currently a top staff member at the Ways and Means Committee, Dr. Egorin also served as a Senior Analyst at the Government Accountability Office. That's a job that gives you a close look under the hood when it comes to federal programs and agencies -- experience that will be highly valuable as Assistant Secretary.

The Finance Committee is going to do our part to keep Dr. Egorin busy, if and when she's confirmed. For example, this committee is hard at work on legislation built around the proposition that every American must have mental health care when they need it. Tens of millions of Americans are living with a mental illness today. Half don't get any treatment. There's a lot of work to be done, as the committee discussed in an excellent hearing last week.

The committee is also working on bringing down the cost of prescription drugs. Americans are still getting clobbered every time they walk up to the pharmacy window. The committee is also hard at work on expanding home and community based services across the country. All of these issues are going to require collaboration between this committee and HHS.

Next are two nominees to serve as Deputy United States Trade Representatives. I'll begin with Sarah Bianchi, who is a longtime member of the Biden economic team. She's served in the Office of the Vice President, the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and here in the Senate, as a staff member here in the Senate. She's played a key role in developing a strong Biden agenda focused on making the U.S. more competitive in the world and giving working people in this country a better chance to get ahead. The breadth of her policy experience is going to be a big asset for Ambassador Tai and USTR overall.

Finally, somebody named Jayme White is also nominated to serve as Deputy USTR. Rumor has it he's a familiar face around here. Kidding aside, it's a pleasure for me to speak a little bit about why I believe

Jayme is an excellent nominee – and it's not just because Jayme also hails from the Pacific Northwest, the son of union workers at Boeing.

Jayme has worked on trade policy for more than 20 years on Capitol Hill. In 2009 I was fortunate to lure him away from his job working for his hometown representative, Congressman Jim McDermott. Since 2014 Jayme has been the top trade and competitiveness advisor for the Senate Finance Committee Democrats.

All in all, for more than a decade, I've had a front-row seat to watch Jayme move every trade negotiation and legislative proposal in a direction that gets better results for workers, for the environment, and for good government.

For example, Jayme was focused on strengthening America's trade enforcement long before that topic was in vogue. He was the key individual building support for the ENFORCE Act in 2015 and 2016. Since it passed, Customs has used it to launch over 130 investigations into trade cheating that undercuts American workers. When the Trump administration's new NAFTA was weak on enforcement, Jayme and Ambassador Tai worked to make huge improvements. As a direct result of their work, USMCA raises the bar over any other trade agreement in the past in terms of enforceable commitments on labor rights and the environment. Jayme has been a leader when it comes to setting standards for digital trade that protect American jobs and innovation.

He's also been a real champion of transparency and accountability in trade policy. It used to be that members of Congress, myself included, knew less about what was going on during trade negotiations than well-connected reporters and industry insiders. If members of Congress didn't have much access, then the American people were totally in the dark. We said that wasn't good enough, and to a great extent, Jayme is the person responsible for changing it.

Among a host of improvements, members now have access to negotiating text while negotiations are happening, and pending agreements must be publicly available for at least 60 days before they can go to Congress for approval. That represents big progress that this committee can continue to build on.

Bottom line, if you've got Jayme White on your team, you're running with the right crowd. He likes scoring trade policy wins for American workers, farmers and businesses even more than he enjoys a good IPA. If and when he's confirmed, Oregon's loss will be the rest of the country's gain.

So I want to thank all of our witnesses for joining the committee today and for their willingness to serve. I'll look forward to questions.

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