

**Opening Statement of Chris Magnus
Nominee to serve as Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Senate Committee on Finance
October 19, 2021**

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and privilege to be sitting before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection. I am grateful for the support of the President and Secretary Mayorkas.

Originally created in 1789 in order to pay our country's Revolutionary War debts, CBP's modern-day responsibilities—facilitating immigration, protecting our nation's border security, promoting trade and travel, and more—are as critical now as they were in those early days following our nation's founding.

CBP is a key part of an immigration system that has welcomed so many families to our country, including my own. My father was an English and Art History professor who immigrated to the U.S. from Norway in 1921. My mother, a pianist and a homemaker, was the daughter of German immigrants. I have two sisters, Carol and Beth, and a brother, Gerhard.

My husband, Terrance Cheung, immigrated to the United States from Hong Kong with his wonderful mother, Clara, who is retired after running her own small business for three decades. Terrance has been a journalist, chief of staff for a mayor and county supervisor, and currently works for the Arizona Superior Court in Pima County. I could not ask for a more supportive partner.

As a career public safety officer, there would be no greater privilege than to lead one of the largest federal law enforcement agencies in the country. As a young man in Lansing, Michigan, I put myself through college, where I earned degrees in Criminal Justice and Labor Relations from Michigan State University. I worked first as a 911 dispatcher, a paramedic, and a deputy sheriff. I then came up through the Lansing Police Department ranks, ultimately attaining the rank of captain.

My 41-year career in public safety has afforded me the opportunity to work in communities of all sizes and types in different geographic areas of the country—each with its own unique needs and challenges. All of them provided opportunities to learn, innovate, and work with talented, dedicated people.

I know all too well the impact that trade and its economic effects can have on America's communities. As a police officer in Lansing, Michigan, I saw firsthand what happened when the U.S. auto industry struggled during the 80s and 90s. Today, thanks to bipartisan efforts to improve our trade policies, auto plants in Lansing and other American cities not only do business on a level playing field but have also been able to expand and flourish. Manufacturing workers throughout the U.S. can now be assured of more pay equity with Mexican and Canadian workers.

I am acutely aware that CBP's role in enforcing trade laws and facilitating trade goes well beyond the manufacturing sector. If confirmed to lead this agency, I will work with this Committee and with Congress to protect intellectual property, U.S. agriculture, and the many products that Americans rely upon.

Addressing forced labor would also be one of my high priorities. While it is hard to imagine something more antithetical to our core values as Americans, eliminating forced labor is more than a philosophical undertaking, it is a moral imperative. We must give full force to laws that punish this modern day slavery, while simultaneously facilitating trade for the overwhelming majority of companies who do business responsibly.

Today, I live in a city close to the U.S. border with Mexico, and consider myself lucky to have visited both borders many times. It is essential to recognize that what we think of as the border is not homogenous, and there is no one solution that will provide us perfect border security. If confirmed, I will do what I have always done in my professional career—uphold the law. I will also expect – without exception – that all agency personnel be conscientious, fair, and humane when enforcing the law.

More than a few colleagues, friends, and family members have asked me, “*What are you thinking?*” Why would I choose to take on the important but challenging responsibility of leading CBP at this moment?

And here is my answer, which the same answer I gave when I started my public safety career in 1979: I want to make a difference.

CBP is a proud agency with a mission that is vital to this country. I believe that by working with Congress, the men and women who serve CBP, and its public and private sector partners, we can build upon its many strengths to make the agency even better.

I pride myself on being a pragmatic and bipartisan problem-solver. The principles that have guided me are integrity, accountability, caring, and resolve. I care about innovative ideas, not ideology. I prize and foster continuous improvement, and then I dig in to get the work done.

If confirmed, my pledge to this Committee and its Members is simple: I will have an unwavering commitment to serving the American people and will lead with intellectual humility and enthusiasm every day.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration of my nomination to this critical role. I look forward to your questions.