

**OPENING STATEMENT – MARÍA L. PAGÁN**  
**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**OCTOBER 26, 2021**

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, members of the Committee – good morning. It is an honor to be before you today as the nominee for the position of Deputy U.S. Trade Representative in Geneva. I am grateful to President Biden for this nomination, and to Ambassador Tai for her support.

I am also grateful to my family - my parents, my two brothers and their wives, and my son – for their support, love, and inspiration. My parents are doctors and dedicated their professional lives to advancing public health in Puerto Rico. I learned from them the value of public service, of taking pride in what you do, and that there is nothing you can't achieve if you just give it a try. They couldn't be here with me, but I am sure they are watching from home.

My son couldn't be here either, as he a first-year law student on the West Coast, but his support is enormously important to me.

I come before you today having spent nearly 30 years as a civil servant, first at the Department of Commerce, and for the last 18 years, at the U.S. Trade Representative's office, representing our country in trade negotiations and litigation. After almost 20 years at USTR, I know well the challenges we face domestically and abroad, and I look forward to drawing on this experience to represent USTR at the World Trade Organization if confirmed.

I want to underscore Ambassador Tai's recent speech where she reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the WTO. However, there is a growing recognition that after 25 years, the institution needs to be reformed in order to be effective and relevant for the next 25 years. If confirmed, it would be an honor to represent the United States in Geneva at this critical juncture for the institution.

In her remarks in Geneva Ambassador Tai emphasized the Biden-Harris Administration's belief that trade – and the WTO – can be a force for good, and she laid out her vision to help the organization reorient its mission to better serve and advance the interests of regular people. For example, taking steps to address the COVID-19 pandemic would be a good start. It also means finding a way to incorporate the interests and priorities of workers into the WTO's work. Additionally, Ambassador Tai spoke about the need to reform the dispute settlement process to help empower Members to secure resolutions and provide confidence that the system is fair. These challenges are central to the WTO's ability to operate as it was envisioned at its founding.

I know this won't be easy and any successful reform requires a willingness to work cooperatively with other members. As Deputy General Counsel at USTR, my job is to get things done, and I will bring that can-do approach and attitude to Geneva. We need to be creative; not just focus on the areas where we disagree, but find the areas where we can agree. That also means listening to each other, not just talking at one another. And, it means listening to voices

outside of Geneva and Washington, DC so we are broadening the perspectives that can be incorporated into our agenda.

That includes working with this Committee and members of Congress. Actions—or inaction—at the WTO directly affects communities, workers, farmers, and small businesses in your states. If confirmed, I commit to maintain open lines of communication with all of you, and represent the interests of your constituents in Geneva.

We are living in challenging times defined by rapid technological innovation, a pandemic, and climate change. Trade has an important role to play in all those areas. If confirmed, I look forward to representing the United States at the WTO to address these challenges and make sure it's a force for good.

As a longtime member of the USTR family, I know I will be able to count on a fantastic career staff to support our efforts in Geneva. USTR staff is known for its excellence and hard work, but also for creativity and can-do attitude. It is reassuring to know they will be there to support me.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning, and to President Biden and Ambassador Tai for their support. I look forward to answering your questions.