Opening Statement
Maria Duaime Robinson
Nomination Hearing
United States Senate
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me today to testify in front of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

I am honored to be nominated by President Biden to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Energy for the Office of Electricity, and I'm humbled to have the opportunity to work with Secretary Granholm in the Department of Energy. Having myself grown up in a small former coal mining town near Scranton, I share the President's concern that we need to provide reliable, secure, affordable, and clean energy to Americans while also creating good-paying union jobs. My background working in the public and private sector on electricity issues provides me with a unique perspective and tools to meet the Department's mission and goals.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge my family and friends for their ongoing support throughout my career. My gratitude knows no bounds for my parents whose hard work and unending support provided me with the freedom to pursue my dreams, my loving husband who gracefully provides our family with stability, and my brilliant 13-year-old daughter who keeps me grounded with reminders that as I am a public servant, she is technically my boss.

My focus on energy and electricity policy emerged from an initial technological interest as an undergraduate studying chemical engineering at MIT, but I have found a true passion for being at the nexus of technology and policy. My time at Navigant Consulting allowed me to work directly with state and local governments, utilities, independent power producers, and major corporations on strategy and implementation of programs to strengthen generation, transmission, and distribution across the nation's grid. Through this work, I traveled with electricians and contractors to distributed energy resource sites and received first-hand lessons in the need to update our grid infrastructure to accommodate higher demand at sources ranging from Logan Airport to rural water treatment plants.

We continue to see this need for additional deployment, working with states and utilities to build new transmission assets and upgrade aging grid infrastructure using the funding provided for in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In leading a national trade association's wholesale market policy and wearing multiple hats in state policy and market analysis, I had the opportunity to work with state utility commissions, state legislatures, state air and energy offices, trade associations, national groups in the energy sector, such as NARUC and NASEO, and directly with utilities, including investor owned and public power, and electric cooperatives. All of these

constituencies will play a key role in ensuring transmission and distribution projects are built in optimal locations with minimal roadblocks.

Part of the work must be done in research and development – taking existing technologies and finding ways to scale them for widespread use, like the Department's Long Duration Storage Energy EarthShot. During my years at Advanced Energy Economy, I had the privilege of working with businesses and utilities who are working in generation, transmission, software, efficiency, smart grid, and much more who will all play a critical role in building and operating a 21st century electric grid. I believe in America's ability to solve problems through technological development with smart investments and well-designed policies; this includes achieving the Biden Administration's goals of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 and maintaining a reliable, resilient grid that can withstand the ever-increasing amount of catastrophic weather-induced events.

With new discoveries being made at rapid-fire pace across the power industry, I want to ensure that we are meeting the moment with flexible policies that can adapt to new advancements in technology. This is especially true for cybersecurity policy that can manage the delicate balance between security, affordability, and feasibility while accounting for technological changes in both software and hardware. I currently sit on the Advanced IT, Internet, and Cybersecurity committee at the state legislative level, and policymakers across the country are grappling with the reality that we could see catastrophic failures without the right precautions. It is incumbent upon the Department to work with experts in cybersecurity to develop and implement technologies and policies that make our grid more secure. I know it is a priority of the Secretary and, if confirmed, would be a priority of mine that cybersecurity is considered in all aspects of the work that we do.

Again, I thank you, Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and all members of the committee, for your time today. Should I be confirmed, I hope this is the beginning of a strong partnership between your offices and the Office of Electricity, and I look forward to answering your questions.