

Testimony of Elizabeth de León Bhargava
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Administration of the U.S. Department of
Housing and Urban Development
Before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
October 26, 2021

Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Toomey, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored and humbled to appear before you today as the nominee for Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Allow me to begin by thanking President Biden and Secretary Fudge for the confidence and trust they have placed in me. I also thank the Committee for scheduling this hearing and considering my nomination.

I'm here today because of my mother, Rosa Bernard, a strong and determined woman who immigrated to the US from the Dominican Republic. She raised my sisters and me as a single mom. I am forever grateful to her for teaching me the value of hard work and service. I'm also grateful to my in-laws, Mom & Dad Bhargava, for being a constant source of strength and encouragement. To my siblings, nieces, nephews, friends and mentors, thank you! know that I cherish you all. And, finally, a special thank you to my husband Neil, for his abiding love and unwavering support.

I understand, from direct personal experience, the critical role HUD plays in the lives of everyday Americans. When I was five, our home was destroyed by fire and in an instant my family and I were homeless. With no home, we felt vulnerable and challenged to meet the everyday demands of work, school, and life. We were fortunate to have the support of government and community groups, which allowed us to stay together and find safe and secure housing. The experience was a life lesson in the direct role government can play in supporting families and building communities. It is why I have dedicated my career to public service.

The mission of HUD is to develop and manage programs that address America's critical housing needs. It provides support to avoid foreclosure, enable home ownership, ensure fair lending, enforce fair housing laws and provide rental assistance to seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and low to middle-income Americans, like my own family.

However, HUD faces its own challenges. Since 2012, HUD's workforce has decreased by almost 20%. At the same time, the demand for HUD's services has increased substantially, as families emerge from a global pandemic, and need the stability of good homes and strong communities. Strong leadership will be key to ensuring program continuity and that HUD is able to meet its critical mission.

I am a leader with more than 20 years of government experience and a proven track record delivering outcomes which have directly improved the lives of the communities I served.

I began my career in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and from there have held roles of increasing responsibility at the New York State Attorney General's Office, New York City Mayor's Office, the New York City Council, and most recently as the New York State Deputy Secretary for Labor and Workforce.

As the Deputy Secretary for Labor and workforce, I was responsible for all labor and workforce policy and operations, impacting almost 10 million working Americans, across both the public and private sector. I managed a portfolio of nine agencies and task forces operating with a combined budget of more than \$5 billion.

My leadership enabled the growth of a diverse, inclusive and talented workforce of 170,000 state workers across 96 state agencies. My responsibilities included negotiating with more than a dozen unions, managing risk and ensuring compliance with Federal, State, and local labor laws. My years of governmental leadership and management experience have made me realize that consistency, efficacy, curiosity, and humility are the cornerstones of impactful public service.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, colleagues at HUD, and stakeholders to ensure the success of the Department by securing the qualified staff and the resources needed to administer the programs that are so critical to families across this great nation.

If confirmed, it would be a distinct honor to serve as Assistant Secretary for Administration at HUD.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.