

**Opening Statement of Chairman Sherrod Brown  
Hearing on EXIM and HUD Nominations**

**Tuesday, October 26, 2021**

The Committee meets today to consider the nominations of:

Reta Jo Lewis to be President and Chair of the Export-Import Bank; and Elizabeth de Leon Bhargava to be Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We congratulate the nominees and thank them for appearing here today. We welcome their families and friends in attendance, and watching from home.

Both nominees are highly qualified and are ready to work for the American people, and for their jobs and their businesses and their homes.

As President of the five member EXIM Board of Directors, Ms. Lewis would be responsible for leading our country's official export credit agency as it supports U.S. workers and manufacturers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and throughout our country—in the face of competition, often unfair competition, from nations like China.

Both of these nominees are trailblazers in their own way – Ms. Bhargava was the first Latina to serve as Deputy Secretary for Labor and Workforce for New York State, and Ms. Lewis would be the first Black woman to lead EXIM.

It's a welcome change – our government works better when it looks like America, and EXIM will work best if it reflects the diversity of American manufacturers and small businesses.

A proud native of Statesboro, Georgia, Ms. Lewis has more than 25 years of distinguished leadership experience in international affairs, law, and public policy.

She currently serves as a Senior Fellow and Director of Congressional Affairs at the German Marshall Fund—a non-partisan policy organization dedicated to strengthening transatlantic cooperation. At the German Marshall Fund, Ms. Lewis leads bipartisan exchanges for members of Congress.

Ms. Lewis served at the State Department during the Obama Administration, helping build and support relationships between the Department, state, and local governments and their foreign counterparts.

If confirmed, she will head an agency that is vital to manufacturing jobs in Ohio and all of our states, and to our country's economic competitiveness. There are more than 100 export credit agencies and credit programs around the world that support foreign manufacturers.

China's export finance activity is larger than all of the export credit provided by the G7 countries combined, and we can expect China to continue using export credit as a weapon to win manufacturing business in critical sectors.

Ohio jobs depend on Ms. Lewis's success, and I look forward to her getting to work. Welcome to the Committee, Ms. Lewis. Glad to have you here today.

As Assistant Secretary for Administration at HUD, Elizabeth de Leon Bhargava would be responsible for ensuring the Department has talented and dedicated public servants ready and able to meet our most pressing housing challenges.

She would oversee offices that are responsible for recruitment and staffing, procurement, and providing administrative support to HUD employees.

Ms. Bhargava has extensive experience at the highest levels of state and local government. From 2015 to 2020, Ms. Bhargava served as Deputy Secretary for Labor and Workforce for New York State. She managed a portfolio of agencies with a budget exceeding \$5 billion and more than 5,000 employees.

She also served as First Deputy Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the New York City Council where she helped manage a staff of over 300 people. Earlier in her career, she served as Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Department of Small Business, and served in the New York State Office of the Attorney General.

We are glad to have you here today, Ms. Bhargava.

We are grateful to Ms. Lewis and Ms. Bhargava for appearing here today, and for their willingness to serve the American people at this critical time.

I look forward to your testimonies.

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