

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. It is an honor to be here as President Trump's nominee for Secretary of Labor. I know today is a very busy day in the Senate, and I am indebted to the Committee for taking time to conduct this hearing.

I want to thank Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz for their kind introductions. I have known both of them for many years. I truly appreciate their support and admire their dedication to public service.

I am especially grateful for their support given that my biggest fans—my wife Jan and my two young daughters, Delia and Rosalia—cannot be here. Jan is an amazing woman, a fantastic mother, and I am deeply grateful for her love and support. She is in Miami because Delia, my eldest, has her 1st Grade IOWA tests this week; her sister Rosalia will be in kindergarten next year.

Mr. Chairman, I want, in particular, to thank my father and mother because my story begins with that of my parents, and it frames my perspective on the important responsibilities I would assume if confirmed as Secretary of Labor.

My parents fled from a Cuban dictatorship in search of freedom. They met in Miami, while in high school, fell in love, and married young. My mother had me while she was still in her teens. Neither attended college.

Growing up, I saw my parents struggle. My mother started out as a typist at a real estate firm. At times, she commuted 90 minutes each way to her job. My father served in the Army. Later, he tried to start a small business. But he found that the growing gap between his skills and the demands of being a small business owner too difficult. He went on to hold various jobs, ending his working life as an inventory clerk at a cell phone store.

Our family lived paycheck to paycheck. My grandmother cared for me while my parents worked full-time. My parents would often go into debt and, at times, take a second job to make ends meet and to provide me with the best education possible.

I am here today because of them. My success is their success. Their sacrifice and perseverance made my education possible. They were able to give me opportunities they did not have because even though they didn't attend college, they had something very important – they had jobs. And though at times they lost their jobs, they were always able to find another job.

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Mr. Chairman, today many Americans are facing the same struggles my parents endured, only worse. My parents had jobs; but not all Americans have jobs.

Some Americans have seen jobs go overseas.

Some Americans have seen jobs filled by foreign workers. Indeed, I've read reports that some Americans have been asked to train their foreign replacements.

And some Americans see that jobs are available, but these available jobs require skills that they do not have.

Helping Americans find good jobs, safe jobs, should not be a partisan issue. In my visits with each of you, it was crystal clear that each Member of this Committee wants to help American workers find good, safe jobs—even if you do not all agree on how best to realize this goal.

I share this goal with you. We may not always agree on the how, but at least let us agree on the need. If confirmed, I hope to have the benefit of an ongoing dialogue with each of you about how we can advance these goals within the context of a dynamic, global economy that is changing

more rapidly with each passing year, and within the constraints of limited resources.

I would like to close with a brief discussion of a few items in particular. The first is the “skills gap.” As I visited with Members of this Committee, I repeatedly heard that in your states the jobs are there, but the skills too often are not. In one of your states, for example, a community college was teaching welding techniques that employers no longer used. Not surprisingly, the students could not get a job when they graduated.

We can and must work to reduce the skills gap. We need to make better efforts to align job training with the skills the market demands of its workers, especially as advancing technology changes the types of jobs available in our economy. The Department of Labor, along with local governments, industry, and educational institutions, can partner to have substantial positive impact on American workers. This is the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), of apprenticeship programs, of Job Corps and of many other programs at DOL. If confirmed, I will work with you to maximize the impact of *every* taxpayer dollar Congress directs towards job training programs.

Second, good jobs should also be safe jobs. Congress has enacted workplace safety laws. The Department of Labor enforces these, and if confirmed, I will work to enforce the laws under the Department’s jurisdiction fully and fairly. As a former prosecutor, I will always be on the side of the law and not any particular constituency.

Finally, the Department of Labor was formed a bit more than 100 years ago, when the Department of Commerce and Labor was split into two. The intent was this: that a voice for Commerce and a voice for Workers within the Executive Branch would promote better decision-making.

I support this concept. An advocate for the American workforce within the Administration is important. Whether it is those who are working, those who still seek work, those who are discouraged or underemployed, or those who have retired, if confirmed as the Secretary of Labor, I will advocate for them. I am proud to have the support both of several dozen business groups and of several private-sector and key public safety unions, who remember with respect my prior government work at DOJ and the NLRB. They know that while we did not always agree on the outcome, I always listened and sought principled solutions.

If confirmed, I hope we—this Committee and the Executive Branch—can work together in the same way to address the need for good jobs, safe jobs and access to training in the skills that the changing workplace demands.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to answering your questions.