

**STATEMENT OF KARLA GILBRIDE
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**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

September 13, 2022

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee, I'm honored to be here today under consideration to serve as general counsel of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). I'm deeply grateful to President Biden for nominating me for this role, and I'm even more grateful to the people in my life who helped me get to the place where that nomination was possible.

The first of those people can't be with us physically today but I know he's here in spirit, and that's my father, James Gilbride. My dad taught me by example about the nobility of service, starting with his service to this country in the military followed by a career in law enforcement. And he taught me through his quiet, steadfast presence that showing up, working hard, and treating others with respect are virtues worth emulating.

My mother, Janet, is here today. From her I learned at an early age about leadership and about taking the initiative to address unmet needs. I was born with an eye condition that caused me to be totally blind. My mom looked around for support groups for parents of blind children in Long Island, New York, where we lived, and upon finding that there weren't any such groups, she started one. She also took on leadership roles within our church and school district, and many evenings during my childhood she presided over meetings at our kitchen table. Like many parents, she was a fierce advocate for her child, making sure that I had the same educational opportunities that my sighted peers did, but she broadened those efforts beyond her own family to advocate for other students with disabilities as well.

Also, with me today is my husband, Mark Faulkner, one of the smartest and most generous people I've ever known. Mark is not a lawyer. While I'm most comfortable in a world of words, he's happiest when working with his hands or with data and electronics. Our differences, and the joy he takes in doing things I'm not good at and don't enjoy, remind me every day how important different skills and perspectives are. Our differences make our partnership work, and my life is richer in countless ways because he is part of it. I am grateful beyond words for his support over the years, and I am grateful that he is here today.

Other people also set me on the path that made this nomination possible: teachers who instilled a life-long love of learning and propelled me to excel as a first-generation college

student and then go on to law school; role models in the disability rights and women's rights movements who dared greatly and gave me the courage to dare more while standing on their shoulders; and my current and former employers, who mentored and supported me as I gained skills and confidence as a lawyer.

Throughout my legal career, I have always sought to open pathways of opportunity to those with less money and fewer societal advantages. I have represented restaurant workers, truck drivers, people who endured dangerous conditions in meatpacking plants, and people who use wheelchairs and just want the same transportation options as everyone else.

Along the way I have learned a great deal about litigation, but also about how to effectively communicate and find common ground. I've learned that by listening closely to everyone I interact with, I will learn, I will grow, and I will form relationships that matter. And I can't think of another government agency where using the legal experience and interpersonal skills I've acquired over the years would mean more to me than the EEOC.

The laws the EEOC enforces represent some of this country's greatest ideals, that everyone should have opportunities in the workplace free from barriers caused by bias, harassment, or a failure to accommodate their religion or their disability. If I am so fortunate as to be confirmed to serve as general counsel at this agency, I will work with the commissioners, the regional attorneys and agency employees, employers and their representatives, and those who file charges of discrimination with the agency, to bring those ideals closer to reality. I recognize that the position I have been asked to fill entails challenge and complexity. I welcome the challenge because I believe in the EEOC's mission with every fiber of my being, and I welcome the complexity because I know there are many valuable and diverse perspectives with a lot to teach, and I am eager to learn.

Thank you again to Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.