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**Nominee for Chief Counsel for Advocacy**  
**U.S. Small Business Administration**

**Small Business Committee**  
**United States Senate**  
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Thank you, Chair Landrieu, Ranking Member Snowe, and Members of the Committee. It was a privilege to be asked by President Obama to serve as Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the SBA. It is an honor to be under your consideration for that position today.

My story goes back to the mid 1970s when I was a “bus kid” during the forced racial desegregation of public schools. Police cars would follow my bus from the Dorchester section of Boston to another part of the city. Along the way, I would watch as protesters threw rocks at the bus. Amid this social unrest, my father a janitor, and my mother a nurses’ aide, who had emigrated from Barbados, pushed me and my siblings to stay focused on our education.

After high school, I went to Northeastern University on an academic scholarship where I studied electrical and computer engineering, and went on to Iowa State University for my master’s and later to the University of Wisconsin at Madison for my Ph.D.

For five years, I worked on computer chips at IBM, AT&T and Lucent. We developed innovative new products for the marketplace in the early and mid 1990s.

Then, in 1997, I did what millions of Americans have done throughout history: A couple of friends and I started a small business. We knew that data transfer speeds on the Internet were too slow, so we designed computer chips to increase the speed 10-fold. We grew from a handful of employees to more than 50.

Like so many entrepreneurs in America, I remember this time as a period of great personal growth. It taught me the importance of giving back and being an active part of the community.

In 2001, I was asked to lead one of the SBA’s key programs at the National Science Foundation. As you know, the Small Business Innovation Research program – SBIR – helps small businesses through R&D opportunities across 11 federal agencies.

It was rewarding to watch small business owners who saw a need, developed a solution, and found a way to make that solution viable in the marketplace. During my 4 years at the NSF, we provided funding to more than 300 small businesses throughout the country.

After leaving NSF, I was presented with a great opportunity back in Madison, Wisconsin, a place where I received my doctorate and where I met my wife, Ika, who also is a University of Wisconsin graduate. I joined a firm that worked with technology transfer offices throughout the Midwest. We collaborated with some of the leading universities and small businesses in a region that had not received a lot of attention when it comes to developing new technologies and innovations. My role was to change that, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

As you can see, a common thread throughout my life experiences has been this entrepreneurial spirit.

That spirit has been part of my own personal story. That spirit has been part of the story of the high-tech companies I have worked for. And I have helped foster that same spirit in the people I have advised through my work both in government and in the private sector.

Today, I feel as though the culmination of these life experiences has uniquely prepared me for this opportunity. If confirmed, I believe that my work must focus on both the operations and the mission of the Office of Advocacy.

Briefly, on operations: The office has traditionally commissioned white papers and studies on issues affecting small businesses. While this has created a significant amount of findings and raw data, I want to make sure that the office's activities are both timely and actionable.

In regards to the mission of the office, there are many pressing issues facing small businesses that we must proactively address. I would like to mention three.

First, we must continue our outreach to rural America. Understanding the needs and leveraging the strengths of small businesses in rural areas is critically important to national economic growth. As I have done before, I hope to reach out to community colleges, universities, and small businesses throughout rural America to ensure that we are maximizing their potential. These small businesses need to be in a position to help their local economies thrive and make even stronger contributions to U.S. competitiveness.

Second, the SBA and other federal agencies must continue to ensure small businesses have access to capital. This Committee and Congress have taken significant steps in the Recovery Act to do just that. This is a commitment, though, that must be sustained for all small businesses, be they Main Street shops or potential high-growth companies that drive innovation.

Third, for many small businesses, their most important asset is their intellectual property. It is the foundation on which they build their entire company and create the jobs that are critical to our economy. We need to examine how best to protect these assets for our small businesses owners to ensure they are not undercut in the global marketplace.

In order to advance these priorities and others, I will work closely with partners throughout the Administration, with each of you, and – of course – with entrepreneurs and small business owners themselves.

Finally, on a personal note, over the years, I have worked with a number of minority-owned, women-owned and disadvantaged businesses. In fact, one of the things I am most proud of is a fellowship fund I created at the University of Wisconsin for African-American engineering students who could become tomorrow's small business leaders.

I am reminded every time I visit our cities, though, that we still have a long way to go. There are too many young people who still don't know that if they work hard, they can go to college and one day maybe even start their own business, perhaps with the help of a loan, training, good research data, or other tools provided by the SBA or the Office of Advocacy.

What motivates me most is that I want the next generation – including my own three children – to have an even greater opportunity to live the American Dream.

If confirmed for this position, that will be my driving force, and I will work every day to ensure that America's small businesses continue to lead our economy and our nation to greater heights. Thank you and now I'm pleased to take your questions.