

Statement of Laurie E. Locascio, Ph.D.
Nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology,
Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
October 20, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, Distinguished Members of the Committee, it is my great honor to appear before you today as nominee for Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and Undersecretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology.

Before I begin, I am proud to introduce my three sons – Payton, Paul, and Patrick – who took time off work to be with me here today. My sons are all wonderful, hardworking individuals employed in industries that have been incredibly demanding during the pandemic – cybersecurity, food and beverage service, and behavioral health counseling.

I am excited about the possibility of returning to NIST and humbled to be nominated to lead it. In my long tenure there I saw the entirety of the organization. I understand its unique mission and its unrelenting focus on excellence. NIST helps U.S. industries compete and supports the great innovation economy for which America is known.

I recognize the great responsibility of leading one of the world's premier scientific agencies when the power of science to change the world has never been so necessary and apparent. Our understanding and treatment of disease during this pandemic progressed with a speed that had no historical precedent. This is because our ability to understand the science of biology and the engineering behind biomanufacturing has intensified and accelerated in recent years. Science and engineering accelerate when we develop better tools and processes to make more sensitive and reliable measurements. NIST contributes to this progress with advanced measurement science and tools that push the boundaries of scientific discovery in areas like bioscience, quantum computing, and AI. Ensuring NIST's continued pursuit of scientific and technical excellence will be a priority for me if confirmed.

The NIST mission is vital: I know that the work done by this agency is central to global competitiveness for both existing and emerging industries. Much in the way that the famed Bell Labs was the innovation engine for the telecom industry in the last century, the NIST Labs have a longstanding reputation as the innovation engine for key industries in the U.S.

NIST's relentless pursuit of the best measurement science is the basis of U.S. innovation. NIST measurements and standards are trusted worldwide and underpin our commercial trade. Furthermore, NIST's focus on the health of all our industries contributes to a quality of life in the U.S. that is unparalleled.

From my background, you can see that I have experience as a researcher, an inventor, a leader in standards, and overseeing large scientific organizations. If confirmed, I will also lead manufacturing programs that are critical to the Nation's success. Manufacturing is a priority for

me that draws from my roots. I grew up in a small town in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in the region covered by western Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. My dad was a physicist in West Virginia, and my mom worked for a pediatrician in Maryland. My town had a thriving manufacturing base that was decimated in the 1980's, leaving its population struggling for jobs. As a result, the town dwindled in size and has struggled to recover. We must bring manufacturing back to places like my hometown all over America. The NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and Manufacturing USA programs work in coordination with every state in the U.S. to help make that happen. If I am confirmed, I will work with this committee to support a thriving manufacturing base in all areas of the country. In this worldwide distributed economy, there is no reason why some parts of America should be left behind.

I worked at NIST for three decades, and it provided me with a rich environment in which to learn, grow and excel. NIST supported me when being a female leader in science was not well accepted. I have used that experience to build inclusive organizational cultures and to promote diversity in science and scientific leadership knowing that success and innovation depends on our ability to engage everyone in creating solutions.

The employees at NIST who help the organization meet its broad and unique mission work with integrity, independence, and innovation. These are dedicated public servants who have an impact on our economy that ripples across the U.S. and the world. Maintaining the caliber and increasing the diversity of that superb workforce is vital to NIST's future. If confirmed, it would be an honor to work with them, this Committee, and stakeholders to lead the agency.

Thank you for inviting me here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.