

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

U.S. Senate Committee on Finance Hearing to Hearing to Consider the Nominations of Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador, Brent Neiman, of Illinois, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Finance and Development, Joshua Frost, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Financial Markets, Samuel R. Bagenstos, of Michigan, to be General Counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services, and Christopher S. Wilson, of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Innovation and Intellectual Property Negotiator, Office of the United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador.

Witnesses: Maria L. Pagan; Brent Neiman; Joshua Frost; Samuel R. Bagenstos; Christopher S. Wilson

October 26, 2021

Question and Answer with the Witnesses

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Cantwell: Thank you. Congratulations to all the nominees. Ms. Pagan, Once I heard then Commerce Secretary Ron Brown said he was Secretary of all of Commerce, but if he was getting a call from a member of Congress, he guaranteed it was about fish. And it just shows you here how important fisheries are to all our states, to the United States, and now to the globe. Why? Because we see warmer climates affecting fisheries, we see the Arctic being opened and probably claims to fisheries we have, you know, our history about fishing in international waters and illegal fishing. So I'm sorry, illegal fishing in our waters and setting up those boundaries.

So I hope that you will be very serious about keeping your foot on these negotiations, as it relates, well, I should say, you know, in a growing world, looking for more protein sources, and people are looking at fisheries. So we have good fisheries management in the United States, I would hope that that would be something in the debate that sustainable fisheries should be part of the requirements in trying to create more market. And I believe we should be in the business of exporting what those sustainable fishery practices look like, because we are, at least in parts of our country, very good at it and being very successful. So I may submit something to the record for you.

Mr. Frost, you are going to be in the office overseeing the capital markets and one of the issues is housing policy and I'm very interested. Our committee here has done great work on the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, but we still have a tremendous amount of way to go. We have 7 million units that we need to be built and over 10 million people who live in rent burdened

conditions, [where] 50% of their income is spent on rent. We have just not kept pace with supply.

So I want to make sure that the administration now as we're talking about proposals here, they're doing a lot on putting vouchers into people's hands, I appreciate, the grants or programs that help individuals, but even the Home Grant Program that the administration is pushing, 53% of those get built with the Affordable Housing Tax Credit, it's a partnership between the Home Grant Program and LIHTC. So if you don't increase LIHTC, you're not going to be increasing the supply of affordable housing. So I just want to hear from you that you believe that we need a robust response here, and that you're going to work within the administration to try to get that.

Frost: Absolutely, Senator, the supply of affordable housing is a key issue now. And as you flagged, LIHTC is a principal venue by which affordable housing supply is created. There's no magic bullet solution here. I wish there was, I wish there was a simple resolution. But as you said, things that focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing, things that focus targeted programs that help with down payment support, which helped folks build wealth more quickly, are all critical to the success...

Cantwell: But if we just did those, and we didn't do the supply side, that would be a problem, correct?

Frost: Completely agree.

Cantwell: Okay. So that's the point I'm trying to get out, particularly today, that this is the debate in front of us, that you can spend a lot of money on those issues, but if you're not increasing supply, then you're not going to have a place for these individuals to go.

And so we got to make sure that we're putting a solid number. We proposed in a bipartisan fashion with our colleagues here, Senator Young, Senator Portman, \$29 billion in the Affordable Housing Tax Credit, well, a proposal to increase it by 50%. So there is good bipartisan support and the reason is people know how unique the program is, that you can do lots of different things within your own states and jurisdictions. I mean, you can build something just for veterans, you can build something just, you know, for a workforce, you can do all sorts of things so the flexibility of it is pretty supported and frankly, I just hope we put this money there right now, it's needed.

So Mr. Wilson, I just want you and Ms. Pagan, on the innovation side, you know we've worked hard to give USTR the resources of more lawyers so we can dispute our claims internationally. And obviously build capacity internationally for those countries that don't have quite the same capacity we do to judge these cases. But on this issue of technology, don't we need to be, first of all, getting the world community behind us, you know, on these telecommunications issues, that the only way you're going to have acceptable frameworks is if you have a rule of law. If you

basically have a court system and a government that doesn't own the technology or has a backdoor to it, don't we need to speak loudly on this point, Mr. Wilson?

Wilson: Thanks, Senator Cantwell. Well, I agree completely with you. I think that capacity building and emphasis on respect for the rule law has got to be a critical part of our promotion of innovation through trade policy generally and specifically in the areas of emerging technology, I look forward to working with you

Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.