

Opening Statement of Michelle A. Schultz, Nominee to the Surface Transportation Board before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the United States Senate – November 6, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and distinguished Members of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as you consider my nomination for a second term as a Member of the Surface Transportation Board (“Board”). I am also grateful to President Trump for his continued confidence in me through this renomination.

I wish to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the people who have supported me throughout my professional life. First and foremost, I thank my late parents, Ron and Bonnie Albright, whose example instilled in me the belief that hard work and integrity are the true measure of success. That principle guides me in everything I do. I would also like to acknowledge my brother Dave Albright, my sister-in-law Heather, and my nephews, Carson and Zach. Though they are not here today, their love and support are profoundly meaningful. Joining me today are my two daughters, Sophia and Ella Schultz, who are my greatest inspiration. Having them here today means the world to me. Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow Board Members, Chairman Fuchs and Member Hedlund, for joining me today and for their continued collegiality and dedication to our shared mission.

For nearly five years, I have had the honor and privilege of serving on the Surface Transportation Board. From the beginning, I recognized the Board’s critical role as the economic regulator of the freight rail industry and its responsibility for resolving service issues involving freight rail carriers and interstate passenger rail entities, along with certain limited jurisdictional matters. While that remains true today, my time on the Board has deepened my appreciation for the complexity and significance of its work. By listening to stakeholders, reviewing the evidentiary record, and applying the law, I have gained a fuller understanding of how the Board’s decisions affect American consumers, the supply chain and ultimately, the nation’s economy.

During this time, I have worked closely with my colleagues and the dedicated staff of the Board to ensure that our nation’s freight rail network operates efficiently and reliably. As a Member, I have had the opportunity to navigate a wide range of complex and consequential challenges that reflect the evolving demands on our freight and passenger rail systems. These include mergers, abandonments, service reliability issues, rail line construction applications, restoration of rail service, data modernization, on-time performance oversight, and rate review processes.

In every matter that comes before the Board, I am guided by several core principles: the evidentiary record, the governing law, and the policy objectives set forth by Congress in the Rail Transportation Policy. I am deeply aware of the impact that Board decisions have on the parties who appear before us and on the broader public. I take seriously the trust placed in me by Congress and the President, and I approach each case with fairness, impartiality, and a steadfast commitment to applying

the law on its merits – always mindful of what best serves the long-term health and vitality of the national rail network.

If confirmed, I will continue this approach and remain committed to advancing the Board's mission. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with industry stakeholders, my fellow Members, and this Committee to address the important issues that come before the Board.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.