

Statement for the Record

**The Honorable Stacey A. Dixon, Ph.D.
Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence**

**Hearing on Personnel Vetting Reform
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence**

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Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our significant progress on personnel vetting reform. I am pleased to be here representing Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Avril Haines, who serves as the Security Executive Agent (SecEA) for the Federal government and a key member of the Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council (PAC). In her role as the SecEA, the DNI is responsible for overseeing background investigations, adjudications, and, as applicable, polygraphs for eligibility for access to classified information or to hold a sensitive position. Her responsibilities include developing and issuing uniform and consistent policies and procedures, along with exercising oversight, to ensure that these vetting processes are effective, efficient, timely, fair, and secure.

It has been more than three years since PAC representatives were last before you discussing the topic of personnel vetting reform. That was in January of 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began. At that time, our predecessors provided updates on the Office of Personnel Management's National Background Investigative Bureau transition to the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, the status of the steady state of the background investigation inventory, progress on the DNI's Continuous Evaluation System, and an outline of the proposed framework to transform the personnel vetting process, known as Trusted Workforce 2.0 (TW 2.0). This transformation effort has introduced a risk-based model that leverages modern IT, improves timeliness of personnel vetting, reduces complexity, eliminates repetitive and duplicative checks, and better utilizes resources. Our PAC predecessors noted then that the approach would be iterative with actual implementation of policies beginning in late 2022. I am proud to say that, despite a global pandemic, we have stayed committed to

those timelines. In fact, last year was the most consequential year of TW 2.0 to date. In coordination with my partners testifying today, a number of personnel vetting policies, guidelines, and standards were jointly issued that will allow departments and agencies to implement the actual changes envisioned when TW 2.0 was in the initial planning stages. I would like to highlight some of those original drivers for reform, notable progress, and overall impact.

At the heart of TW 2.0 is reform, transformation, and modernization. By aligning personnel vetting across the suitability/fitness, credentialing, and national security mission spaces into one vetting model, leveraging technology and automation, and shifting away from the traditional periodic reinvestigation model, TW 2.0 seeks to deliver talent to mission faster. Doing so also helps to improve the mobility of the workforce to respond to mission needs, and, ultimately, aids the ability to detect risk earlier, while mitigating risk more proactively. Essentially, this effort is creating a more trusted workforce from a risk-management perspective.

Through the issuance of several policy documents, we have created guidelines and standards that identify intended outcomes for personnel vetting. We have outlined an engagement approach that emphasizes trust in the process and shapes a culture of personal accountability and shared responsibility between the investigative subject and the security practitioner. We revised the investigative standards and issued new performance management standards with measures and metrics to ensure that activities and services meet desired outcomes. Later this spring, we expect to issue revised National Training Standards for security adjudicators and background investigators that align with TW 2.0 goals for enhancing the quality of investigations and adjudications, to include a renewed focus on the importance of mitigating bias, as well as ensuring cultural competency, fairness, and consistent, equitable treatment of all individuals who are being vetted. We are also finalizing the information collection approval process for the personnel vetting questionnaire standard forms that we ask applicants to fill out during their background investigations. The updates are based on feedback from agencies and the public and will ensure better alignment of information collection efforts and what we believe will be an improved overall applicant experience.

We have successfully introduced a continuous vetting (CV) capability for the national security sensitive population that allows us to transition away from the traditional periodic reinvestigation model. In fact, ODNI has now certified 54 departments and

agencies with national security sensitive populations as having compliant personnel security programs that are able to implement expanded capabilities through a combination of automated record checks and agency-specific information. CV is now identifying adverse information in real time and creating the ability to respond to information much more quickly. Not only is it improving the protection of IT systems, facilities, people, and mission, but CV also incorporates a wellness factor by allowing for earlier identification of problems such as financial hardships, substance abuse, and addictive behaviors. By identifying these issues more quickly, employers are now able to intervene early and leverage robust resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs, to address concerns and retain employees as valuable, productive members of the workforce.

Although more needs to be done to institutionalize these transformative reforms, TW 2.0 is already demonstrating its effectiveness, as it works to produce the benefits envisioned during its inception, as my colleagues and I are prepared to discuss further with you today.

Additionally, DNI Haines and I believe that it is fundamental to our national security to ensure that we recruit and retain a diverse workforce made up of people who think differently, see problems differently, and overcome challenges differently. The Federal workplace must be representative of our American society. The Intelligence Community is making strides in this regard, and we recognize that we must continue to work to eliminate any perception of bias in the security clearance vetting process. As such, we are dedicated to removing structural and cultural barriers that might prevent qualified personnel from applying for jobs with the Federal government and encouraging a wider, more diverse applicant pool from across the country. We will continue to ensure that personnel vetting reform includes consistent, fair, and transparent processes.

The PAC also recognizes the nation's changing societal landscape. The TW 2.0 effort provides an opportunity to better align security vetting with these societal changes and provide guidance to address how investigators and adjudicators review matters such as past marijuana usage, mental health, and gender identity. The personnel vetting process must evolve and modernize to align with societal changes. To stay current, TW 2.0 also includes a commitment to further the education and training of security professionals to ensure that cultural competencies are understood and candidates are respected throughout the entire personnel vetting process.

As my predecessors stated before this committee in 2018 and again in 2020, an overhaul of personnel vetting could not occur overnight. To make meaningful change, like that which we are seeking to do, requires an iterative process with milestones and deliverables along the way.

Although we have made tremendous progress in the area of personnel vetting, we have not done so in a vacuum. The PAC continues to work collectively as well as take into account views from multiple partners including interagency security personnel, civil liberties and privacy experts, hiring officials, legal advisors, industry partners, and Congressional committees.

I would like to particularly emphasize the important role that our industry partners play as they have been instrumental in our ability to make sustained progress. Our engagement and outreach with representatives from industry has never been stronger. Their voice and advocacy for transformation has assisted the TW 2.0 team with tackling concerns and challenges head on. Industry has advocated for the elimination of periodic reinvestigations, reciprocal treatment of clearances, a single uniform policy structure, and a reengineered approach to personnel vetting processes. Our approach has followed this path and accomplished goals that address many of their initial concerns. We will continue to work with industry and ensure that their voices are heard as we continue to refine our implementation strategies.

Recognizing the significant successful accomplishments over the last few years, we must leverage this momentum and stay focused on improving and completing the TW 2.0 transformation. This will continue to require strong senior leadership commitment and support from Congress to achieve final implementation.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify before this committee on our successful TW 2.0 journey thus far. I am happy to address any questions.