

**Opening Statement for John Arrigo
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Portugal
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 15, 2025**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic. I am enormously grateful and honored by the confidence President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. I am blessed to have a wonderful and supportive family, my wife Megan, my daughters Alyssa, Angela and Amanda, my brother Jim, my sister Virginia, and my nephew Freddy, are all here with me today.

Thank you, Senator Graham, for the gracious introduction.

If confirmed, I pledge to serve my country honorably, to advance our core national interests, and to always place America First.

I have been a successful entrepreneur and business leader for over 30 years. During this time, my experiences have given me deep expertise in managing teams, negotiating complex issues, and building relationships. I am confident that my professional experience and business acumen developed over three decades will enable me to represent and advance U.S. interests effectively and to carry out the mission President Trump has entrusted to me.

I am privileged to have this opportunity today in large part due to my family, and in particular my beloved parents, Joseph and Frances Arrigo. My father was a visionary leader behind our family's business, the Arrigo Automotive Group, which he established with my brother Jim and that eventually became one of the top auto groups in the country. As a family business, we built our brand focused on our employees and our customer relationships and not just the transaction. Which are traits I will carry forward in this next chapter.

My desire to serve as Ambassador and advance our core national interests is borne out of the recognition of how my family and I have been blessed by the

privilege of being citizens of this great nation and now I have an opportunity to give back and serve our country. If confirmed, I will use all the experience I have developed to cultivate our relationship with Portugal to make our nation stronger, safer and more prosperous.

Portugal is a founding member of NATO, and the second country to recognize American independence. Nearly 1.5 million Portuguese Americans live in the United States, helping to generate strong and vocal pro-American sentiment in Portugal and fostering close bonds of friendship.

I had the honor of visiting the Azore Islands for a wedding a few years ago. I was particularly struck by the breathtaking natural beauty, the rich and diverse culinary traditions, and the warm hospitality of the Portuguese people. I was fascinated by the religious, cultural, and family values that resonated deeply with my own Italian heritage.

The U.S. has turned to Portugal for political and material support in many peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts throughout the years, and they have always been an enthusiastic supporter of U.S. and NATO operations around the world. Portugal's hosting of the U.S. Air Force's 65th Air Base Group at Lajes Field in the Azores provides a key logistics hub in the mid-Atlantic, while providing mission critical support for aircraft and aircrews as well as communication services to U.S. and NATO Allies. If confirmed, I promise to enhance this close and historic relationship in several key areas:

My first objective as Ambassador will always be the safety and security of American citizens abroad. Tens of thousands of Americans call Portugal home, and 2.6 million Americans visited Portugal last year, making the United States the third-largest source of tourism to Portugal.

Second, I will strengthen Portugal's contributions to NATO to ensure we can achieve peace in the region through strength. Although a trusted Ally, Portugal still lags behind most NATO countries, only reaching 2 percent this year. As Ambassador, I will work with Portugal to help increase defense spending in line

with the Hague Defense Commitment of five percent and ensure Portugal does its fair share and contributes more to Europe's security.

Finally, I will advocate for expanding our commercial ties with Portugal and addressing national security challenges posed by rivals like China. As the United States is Portugal's largest trading partner outside the EU, there is significant potential to grow this economic relationship. I will also work closely with Portugal to address concerns about China's investment and influence in critical sectors to ensure the protection of our mutual economic and national security interests.

If confirmed, I will also work to balance our trade relationship by eliminating our trade deficit of over \$3.5B with Portugal by seeking more export opportunities for American businesses emphasizing the fact that America is open for business.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions and, if confirmed, working closely with all of you to strengthen our relationship with Portugal and advance our core national interests.