

**Statement of Ambassador David Pressman
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Hungary
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 23, 2022**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to return to this Committee as the President's nominee to represent the United States in Hungary. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the opportunity, if confirmed, to join the exceptional team of public servants at Embassy Budapest at a time of enormous complexity and urgency.

As you know, we meet against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding around the world. Vladimir Putin has – once again – attacked a sovereign, democratic neighbor, flouting the rules-based international order and challenging the institutions that America and its partners stood up to protect it, including the United Nations Security Council, where I previously served as United States Ambassador. Even for someone who has spent much of my career focused on the worst humanity has to offer – national security threats, human rights abuses, and war crimes – the carnage Putin continues to wreak in Ukraine is staggering.

But where Putin expected weakness, he has found strength. The Ukrainian people's courage and determination has, to borrow the words of a former President, "lit a candle of hope and inspiration ...[reminding] the world that brave hearts still exist to challenge injustice."

When President Reagan spoke those words, he was speaking of Hungary and Hungarians, who, like their Ukrainian neighbors today, inspired people everywhere with their bravery, their thirst for democracy, their zeal for freedom. In October 1956, Hungarian men and women took to the streets to stand up to Soviet oppression, and demanded the right to control their destinies. They did so knowing they could be imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

Their courage changed the course of Hungary and Europe, and inspired successive generations who chose to dedicate their lives to advancing dignity, freedom, and liberty. Including me.

Whether serving in government to advance our nation's interests in the Security Council, or working outside of government to uphold human rights, I have always strived to dedicate myself to advancing the fundamental values that make our nation exceptional. If confirmed, I will bring that same passion for our interests and values to my work as Ambassador to Hungary.

Hungary is a long-time friend, ally, and partner that makes significant contributions to common security objectives such as combating terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation. As a NATO Ally, Hungary supports efforts to defend NATO's Eastern Flank at this critical moment, and has been our partner in addressing challenges around the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans. Hungary is also home to hundreds of U.S. companies, and the citizens of our nations take part in rich and growing cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges.

As both a NATO Ally and member of the European Union, Hungary joined the world in

condemning Putin's unprovoked and brutal war in Ukraine, and ultimately supported European Union efforts to impose severe costs on Putin.

However, Hungary's reticence in that process, and the obvious influence of Russia and China in Hungary – and on its government – are causes for serious concern. Not just for the United States' interests, or Europe's, but for the people of Hungary. If confirmed, combatting the malign influence of Moscow and Beijing, and preserving – and indeed, strengthening – our collective response to Putin's war of choice will be a top priority.

The threats to democracy in Hungary are real and merit our determined attention. Human rights, media freedom, and the rule of law, are not nice-to-haves in Hungary – or anywhere else. They are fundamental foundations for sustaining democracy and liberty – and for meeting people's most basic needs. Today in Hungary, we see deeply troubling trends in each of these areas. If confirmed, I will support efforts to advance and protect these fundamental rights and transatlantic values.

The opportunity to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Hungary is an opportunity to bring our countries closer together, and to deepen the ties between our economies and our people. And that is essential, because the fates of our nations are already very much linked. A free, safe, and secure Europe, of which Hungary is an integral part, is fundamental to a free, safe, and secure United States. The Hungarian people overwhelmingly view themselves as we do – as an integral part of the transatlantic community. That shared conviction is something we have a vital stake in preserving.

No matter how difficult the issues we face, we will not lose sight of our common interest in restoring peace and security to Europe, or of Hungary's role in that. And we will not equivocate in advancing the cause of liberty and human dignity.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to bring us closer to each other, and closer to the ideals of democracy's promise.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to answer any questions.