

**Opening Statement of Candace Bond**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**  
**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**July 28, 2022**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee. It is my honor to appear as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have my husband, Steve McKeever, our daughter, Maddox and my brother, Les Bond Jr. here today. They have been constantly supportive through this process, and I am thankful for the love and support of my son, mother, and many family members who are watching this hearing.

Our family represents a proud line of Black educators, professionals, and community leaders. Descended from slaves, our family has made meaningful contributions to the fabric of our nation. Ours is a very American story.

My mother Anita Bond was the first Black female student to graduate magna cum laude from Saint Louis University where she recently received her honorary doctorate. She also served as president of the St. Louis School Board and on President Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Commission. My late father Dr. Les Bond was a prominent physician, surgeon, and community leader and was appointed to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners. Other prominent members of our family, including Julian Bond, former NAACP Chairman, were passionate about improving the quality of life for their communities. Theirs are the shoulders on which I proudly stand. I have sought to apply my abilities to devise solutions that lift people up, strengthen communities, and inspire sustainable change.

After completing my graduate education, I held senior executive positions at leading cultural media and entertainment companies. At AESA, Inc. I advised public and private entities in the areas of social impact, community, and business development. I played a key role in advancing transformational infrastructure and commercial projects that served my community. I also worked to improve our public education system for over two million families as an official for the Los Angeles County Office of Education. As chair of the MLK Community Development Corporation, I am working to improve health equity, access to care for underserved populations. Additionally, I have fought to ensure that no community is left out of our clean energy future, representing small businesses and environmental groups on California's utility consumer advisory panel. The values instilled in me by my family and my experiences as a business and community leader have equipped me to advance the common interests of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago as ambassador.

As a specialist in building strong public-private partnerships, I understand the value of good governance in promoting equitable economic prosperity and ensuring that democracies can meet the needs of and deliver for their people. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work to promote accountability and transparency, and combat corruption, which not only helps improve the

overall climate for foreign direct investment and trade but also enables inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all citizens.

As the United States looks to partner with countries to reduce climate impacts and bolster energy security, Trinidad and Tobago is well-positioned to help speed the development of clean energy infrastructure and climate adaptation projects in the region. While natural gas remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, it is looking ahead toward diversifying its energy resources. Through support for improved access to financing and technical assistance, the United States can help spur Trinidad and Tobago's transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Of course, my greatest responsibility if confirmed will be ensuring the safety and security of the 13,000 American citizens living in Trinidad and Tobago and the thousands more who visit each year for business and tourism. Keeping Americans safe also requires the diligent implementation of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative-funded citizen safety programs that work to prevent gang violence, reduce violent crime, and strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system.

Trinidad and Tobago is a regional leader on security and a partner in the fight against transnational organized crime. I look forward to working with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and international partners to help better support vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees. I hope to work together with this committee to address pressing diplomatic matters in Trinidad and Tobago and the broader region.

I am humbled by the honorable mission President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken have asked me to take on as Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I pledge to dedicate my skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago, to advance U.S. interests in the world, and to promote American democratic values. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.