

Draft Opening Testimony
Opening Testimony for Joseph Popolo, Jr.
Nominee for Ambassador to The Netherlands
SFRC

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am deeply honored by the confidence President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. I am grateful for the support of my family, especially my amazing wife of 32 years Chris, who is also my best friend. I am also honored to have our daughter Kit and youngest son Connor here today, and who, along with along with our oldest son Buck, mean more to me than anything. I am honored that my mother, Mary Connelly, is also here today.

I am an entrepreneur at heart. I learned about entrepreneurship watching my father, Joseph Popolo Sr., and mother build and grow their computer software company. I will bring that ethos of hard work, team building and drive to my work to preserve and strengthen our historic relationship with the Netherlands.

I spent over 18 years leading the Freeman Company, together with my team transforming the company into the global leader in live events. As its president for seven years and CEO for 11 years, my team and I tripled Freeman's growth to \$3B in revenue, while leading 7,500 employees in 25 cities on four continents – including in the Netherlands. Now, as founder and CEO of Charles & Potomac Capital, my team and I invest in businesses that solve problems and create jobs. If confirmed, I will bring this same passion to build something stronger and better in our critical relationship with the Dutch.

I am also proud to serve on the Board of Trustees of Boston College and to support educational philanthropy. As an entrepreneur, CEO, and philanthropist, I have focused on bridging differences, building consensus, and delivering results, and I am confident I will do the same in our relationship with the Netherlands if I am confirmed.

I admire the Dutch people and their longstanding partnership with the United States. The Netherlands was the second country to recognize our republic and has a long history of peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with the United States. Our Dutch friends are proud of this history. They are thankful for the sacrifices that U.S. servicemen and women made to liberate the Netherlands in World War II. In fact, later this month, the US and the Dutch will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten. At the cemetery, Dutch families have adopted the nearly 8300 graves of US service men and women. In June, NATO will host its annual summit in the Hague. With your support, I hope to be able to represent the United States at these critically important testaments to our relationship.

If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity of building on the legacy of this great friendship and important alliance, and my priorities would include these three important goals:

First, I will work for the continued growth of our trade relationship in a way that prioritizes the prosperity of the American people. The United States enjoys a trade surplus with the Netherlands of more than \$60B, the largest in the world, and Dutch trade and investment support more than one million American jobs. The Netherlands is a global leader in critical and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and semiconductor equipment manufacturing, and they are a valuable partner to the United States in this sector. Drawing on my experience in investment, I will seek export opportunities for U.S. companies, ensure that high-tech cooperation between American and Dutch firms continues, and grow Dutch investment in the United States.

Second, I will continue to encourage Dutch contributions to U.S. national security priorities. The Netherlands' military is a highly effective fighting force, and Dutch defense spending exceeds NATO's 2 percent of GDP spending target. With President Trump's five percent goal in mind, I will work with the Dutch government to lead the way for Europe in reaching this important goal.

Third, I will focus on our cooperation with the Netherlands on critical and emerging technologies. Some of the world's most cutting-edge technology is produced or designed in the Netherlands. Dutch companies play a key role in advanced semiconductors. As one of the most digitally advanced countries in Europe and home to a major global internet exchange, the Netherlands is a vital partner on cyber security. This alliance is even more important as we respond to growing threats from strategic competitors like China.

In closing, I am committed to serving the United States in a bipartisan manner, with dedication and integrity. If confirmed, I will prioritize the wellbeing and safety of U.S. citizens living and traveling in the Netherlands. I am eager to work with this esteemed committee, the hardworking and patriotic American foreign service professionals at the U.S. Mission to the Netherlands, and the indispensable Dutch staff, to advance our nation's interests and strengthen our partnership with the Netherlands. I believe that, by fostering economic growth, establishing a more balanced defense partnership, and protecting and promoting critical technologies, we can create a safer, stronger, and more prosperous future for both our nations.

I'm here to serve, to listen, and to make the United States stronger through this alliance. I would also like to add, having been an up-close observer to this process for the last few months, how edifying it is that you Chairman Risch, and you Ranking Member Shaheen, have conducted these hearings in an extremely professional and bipartisan manner.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions and, if confirmed, to getting to work. Thank you.