

Statement of Sarah Rogers
Nominee for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy
April 9, 2025

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy. I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence. Thank you, Members and staff of this Committee, for meeting with me these past few weeks. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to communicate America's interests and values across the globe.

I also want to thank my parents, Sally and Jeff, who journeyed here from South Carolina, and my husband, Jeff, for their love and patience and support. I could not have done any of this without each of you.

Public diplomacy is the soul of soft power. It comprises the voice and the vision that America presents to the world. For billions of people, our State Department is the closest encounter they ever have with the U.S. government as an institution. The things our diplomats say, and the things our government funds, tell the people of the world what America's values and priorities are.

In the past, we prioritized suppressing so-called "disinformation." That term can target foreign propaganda worth fighting. But these efforts lost their purpose. If I'm confirmed, I will bring clarity of purpose and transparency in our efforts. We have heard the CEO of NPR, which is funded in part by the United States, describe the First Amendment as the number one challenge besetting American journalism. But actually free speech, which is America's most famous freedom, is America's number one strength. That the right to free speech protects inconvenient speech isn't a weakness. It's the whole point.

And free speech also furnishes our best response to rivals, like Iran and the Chinese Communist Party, who want to replace the free exchange of ideas with distortions scripted by the state. China, in particular, spends roughly \$11 billion annually on propaganda – more than ten times what we spend on public diplomacy. But having

dedicated my entire career to advocacy inside and outside the courtroom, including for the First Amendment, I am confident we can make each American dollar count more. That's because we're privileged to tell the American story. And American excellence and innovation sell themselves.

If confirmed, I am committed to appropriately stewarding public diplomacy resources, equipping our practitioners with the skills and resources they need to conduct pragmatic foreign policy that advances our national interests. President Trump has presented a clear foreign policy agenda for the American people, and its lodestar is America First. We must prioritize America's security, strength, and prosperity in each dollar we allocate, and each decision we effect. If confirmed, I will ensure that U.S. public diplomacy is well positioned to deliver these results for the American people.

By leveraging advanced messaging capabilities to speak authoritatively and directly to those who seek to enter the United States illegally, the Department can address the crisis at our borders. Using sophisticated technology and target-audience analysis, we can ensure the message lands with clarity, candor, and force. The State Department's public diplomacy function is uniquely capable in this respect.

If confirmed, it will also be my honor to steward the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which includes the Fulbright, Gilman, and other exchange programs, along with sports and music diplomacy and the shared safeguarding of antiquities and cultural heritage sites. And, I will ensure we take advantage of numerous opportunities afforded by public diplomacy to advance economic opportunity for the American people and American businesses. Just next week, the State Department's Public Diplomacy team will lead our engagement in Expo Osaka, the largest public and economic diplomacy event in the Indo-Pacific region in 15 years. With projected attendance of 28 million, the Expo could generate an audience exceeding the Olympics and the World Cup. This is an incredible chance to build commercial partnerships while showcasing American excellence.

Mindful of our imperative to efficiently deploy and never to waste taxpayer dollars, the Department must also harness the power of AI to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public diplomacy. AI has the ability to process enormous amounts of data and deliver actionable insights in a fraction of the time that it would take a human to do the same. It can help us understand evolving narratives, identify

trends among key audiences, and automate routine administrative tasks. All of this frees up time for State Department professionals to focus on higher-value work, including person-to-person diplomacy.

Thank you for inviting me here today. I welcome the committee's questions.