

**U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Nomination of Joseph V. Cuffari to be Inspector General,
Department of Homeland Security**

March 5, 2019

Senator Gary C. Peters, Ranking Member

Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Dr. Cuffari for being here today and your willingness to take on this challenging role. For over 40 years, Inspectors General have acted as independent, nonpartisan watchdogs tasked with preventing and uncovering fraud, waste, and abuse in the federal government, and promoting efficiency in agency operations. Simply put, the Inspector General makes sure government is doing what it's supposed to do. When there are problems - the Inspector General makes sure that the agency, Congress, and the American people know.

I know that Senator Sinema wanted to be here today to help introduce Dr. Cuffari. In a written statement, she describes Dr. Cuffari as "an honorable public servant." I ask that her full statement be entered into the record.

We need an honorable public servant in this position. An effective Inspector General must be a partner to agency leadership – working together to identify areas at risk and prevent problems before they occur. They must also be a partner to Congress – keeping us apprised of emerging issues and responding to our concerns as we work to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is spent responsibly.

An effective Inspector General must be a leader. The Department of Homeland Security Inspector General supervises almost 800 investigators, auditors, and other employees – all of whom look to the Inspector General for guidance and direction. Most importantly, an Inspector General must be independent and impartial, relentlessly following the facts wherever they may lead.

If confirmed, there will undoubtedly be times when you will have to push back on the Department's top officials. The integrity and effectiveness of the Department will depend in part on your fulfilling that public trust.

The Department of Homeland Security is the third-largest agency in the federal government, with over 245,000 employees and a total budget of \$75 billion. As one of our nation's most critical law enforcement and national security agencies – the Department is charged with safeguarding our nation from threats both foreign and domestic.

The Department has faced significant challenges including recruitment shortfalls – low morale – high acquisition costs – and insufficient financial controls. Robust and adaptable oversight is essential to ensure that the Department is effectively safeguarding our communities and our tax dollars.

Last week, I met with Secretary Nielsen to discuss some of the most pressing issues at the Department including security and commerce at our Northern Border – cybersecurity challenges in Michigan and across the nation – the rise of domestic extremist violence – and ensuring that the Department's actions reflect the core values of our country.

I made it clear that the Department must not discriminate against our fellow Americans because of where they are from or where they worship. Secretary Nielsen committed to work on these issues. My colleagues and I will rely on the Inspector General to help evaluate the Department's performance on these commitments.

The Office of Inspector General has performed critical work in preventing and rooting out fraud, waste, and abuse at the Department of Homeland Security. This has included investigations into reprisal against whistleblowers, including the brave men and women who serve in the United States Coast Guard. The Inspector General's office has conducted random checks at detention facilities – work you yourself conducted at the Department of Justice.

In 2018, investigations by the Inspector General directly resulted in nearly \$36 million in recoveries, fines, and restitution to the federal government. It is critical that the Inspector General achieves high performance standards, so that this important work can continue.

When this body created the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, we also established an agency Inspector General to hold the Department accountable. As we consider your nomination, I will be considering your commitment to independence, integrity, impartiality, and ensuring the Department acts as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. I look forward to your testimony.