Opening Statement of Maria D'Avanzo

Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Hearing on the Nomination of Maria D'Avanzo
to be Inspector General of the U.S. General Services Administration

November 19, 2026

Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters and Members of the Committee –

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by President Trump's nomination to serve as Inspector General (IG) of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and am grateful to this committee for its consideration.

I would like to recognize my friends and family who are here today or watching remotely, especially my husband of 29 years, Joseph D'Avanzo, our son, Vincent, my stepson, JT and his wife Nikki, my stepson Andrew and his wife Taylor and their nineteen-month-old son, and our grandson, Jackson. I would not be here today without their love and support.

It is almost impossible these days to open a newspaper or listen to a news report without hearing about waste, fraud and abuse involving American taxpayer funds. The job of GSA IG is, therefore, of great consequence. The GSA plays a prominent role in real estate, acquisition, and technology within the federal government. As a result, the GSA is well positioned to reduce unnecessary costs and maximize value for the American taxpayer. The GSA IG a critical role in making sure that GSA operations and programs are designed to achieve these goals.

The IG is also tasked with conducting/supervising audits and investigations and keeping the agency head and Congress fully and currently informed about problems/deficiencies and the need for and progress of corrective action. As noted in my pre-hearing materials, I spent a significant part of my 34-year legal career as the Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer at a global, publicly traded commercial real estate services firm. In that role, I conducted audits, investigations and program evaluations. I recommended policies to promote effectiveness and prevent and detect waste, fraud and abuse. I also regularly reported to the firm's General Counsel, Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors regarding ongoing and completed investigations, data analytics, identification of risk trends, corrective action plans and the overall operation and progress of the ethics and compliance program. I am, therefore, confident that my professional experience has equipped me well for the position of GSA IG.

In preparation for today's hearing, I thought extensively about the role of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and my approach to the fulfillment of its mission of promoting economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of the GSA's programs and operations. If confirmed, I commit to carrying out my responsibility to independently and

objectively determine what matters the OIG will review, how the OIG will do its work, what evidence to gather, and what findings and recommendations to make. My efforts will be guided by the goals of providing meaningful value, improving programs and operations, protecting integrity, identifying misconduct, uncovering systemic risk and promoting public trust in the GSA.

As one recently appointed and confirmed IG succinctly put it, independence does not mean isolation. I agree that professional cooperation and constructive engagement enhance efficiency, minimize disruption and promote meaningful corrective action. Cooperation, however, must neither compromise the OIG's independent judgment nor grant the agency control over the OIG's scope, methods, conclusions, recommendations or reports.

As Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer, my job required me to conduct objective analyses of facts, circumstances and evidence without regard to the political, reputational or institutional consequences. It also required me to make and communicate difficult (and sometimes politically unpopular) decisions to various stakeholders within the organization. I expect that working as IG for the GSA will likely present a similar challenge, and I have no doubt that my prior experiences and substantive knowledge have prepared me for it.

Finally, I believe that the American people expect their government to not only be effective but also accountable. Whistleblowers play a critical role in ensuring a responsible and honest government. They are very often the first to witness or learn about wasteful activities or misconduct. Being the voice of integrity is not always easy though. Fear of retaliation is a major reason why individuals do not speak up when they see behavior that they suspect is illegal or improper. It is, therefore, critically important to create an environment in which individuals feel safe raising questions and concerns without fear of retaliation.

If confirmed, I would play a significant role in protecting Whistleblowers and would take largely the same approach I took in the private sector; that is, I would (1) ensure Whistleblower identity and related information are protected (e.g. accessed by only those who have a need to know): (2) maintain a zero-tolerance policy with respect to Whistleblower reprisal; and (3) ensure the staff of GSA and OIG are well trained on their Whistleblower rights and the prohibition on retaliation.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I am truly honored to be here today and look forward to answering any questions you have.