

Statement of Cheryl Marie Stanton  
Nominee for Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division  
Department of Labor

October 4, 2017

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray and other members of the Committee, thank you for having us here today.

It is with great honor that I speak with you about my nomination to the Wage and Hour Administration at the Department of Labor.

Many have asked me why I am interested in the Wage and Hour Division, and why now. Well, after spending the last four plus years helping people find jobs, I want to help ensure they are protected in those jobs. My current position has shown me first hand the dignity of work, and what it means for families to be able to earn money to put food on the table. If confirmed, I look forward to leveraging the tools that the Wage and Hour Division has to allow families to provide for themselves.

The workplace was often a topic of conversation in my house when I was growing up. My dad worked his way through college, and later went on to become a labor and employment lawyer. We talked at the dinner table about the relationships between employers and their workers, that a good company is one that is fair to employees, and why new employment laws were passed. Despite Dad's best efforts to the contrary, I also grew up to become a labor and employment lawyer.

In my time as a labor and employment attorney, I spent about two-thirds of my time on litigation. The remainder of my practice involved counseling employers on whether their processes or intended actions complied with the law, and if not, how they could become compliant without disrupting their business model.

In 2006, I was given the opportunity to work in the White House Counsel's Office. It was my first opportunity to serve, and to impact labor and employment policy. I especially enjoyed looking at proposed legislation or regulations with a view to how the proposals would actually impact workers and employers in the workplace based on my experience with counseling employers in the private sector.

I went back to private practice after my time in Washington, but after a few years I had the itch to serve again. In addition, my parents had retired to South Carolina and my sister had moved to North Carolina with her family. I was given an opportunity to work for Governor Nikki Haley as her Executive Director for the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, and I took it with excitement.

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When I started in the agency we were focused on the unemployment insurance side of the house – South Carolina like many states had gone into debt to pay the massive unemployment insurance benefits needed during the recession. We focused on technology upgrades, business process improvements and employee training to get the loan repaid – and repaid the loan early, saving businesses millions of dollars in interest. We also cut unemployment insurance taxes for three consecutive years, even as we worked to rebuild the reserves in the trust fund.

While much of the external focus was on the unemployment insurance side of the agency, we at the agency began doing more and more to ensure people who wanted jobs in South Carolina were able to find them. We again looked at better processes for our SC Works Centers (which is what SC has branded our American Job Centers), and we increased training for front line staff who work with job seekers. We strengthened our partnerships with other agencies and entities that provide workforce development and training services to individuals and businesses. And as the economy got better we started prioritizing our work on what we call “priority populations” – those individuals with the greatest barriers to employment such as veterans, the disabled, out of school youth, homeless and ex-offenders.

One program we started – the Second Chance Initiative – is a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Corrections. The two agencies literally created an American Jobs Center behind the wire at one of South Carolina’s state prisons. One of the Department of Employment and Workforce’s (DEW) Wagner-Peyser staff members works full time in the facility. Inmates who are due to be released in the next 60-90 days relearn computer skills, work on their resumes, practice their interview skills and search for jobs. Meanwhile, outside the wire, DEW’s business services representatives ask every employer they meet whether the business is willing to be a “Second Chance Employer” – i.e. whether they will hire ex-offenders. DEW then attempts to match ex-offenders as they are being released to those on the Second Chance list. To date, SC has seen more than 70 percent of those released find work.

If given the opportunity, I welcome the chance to work with you, your staff, the very knowledgeable and professional career staff at the Wage and Hour Division, and the public at large to administer the important laws entrusted to the Division. I believe that together we can ensure the laws protecting American workers are properly enforced.

Thank you again, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray. I look forward to answering any questions you and the Committee members have.