Opening Statement
Joseph F. DeCarolis
Nomination Hearing
United States Senate
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, distinguished members of the Committee: it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the nominee for Administrator of the Energy Information Administration. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Granholm for trusting me with this important role.

I also want to thank my family, especially my wife Christine, for their support.

I am deeply honored by the opportunity to lead the EIA. EIA collects, curates, analyzes, and disseminates data pertaining to all aspects of the U.S. energy system. As the federal statistical agency within the Department of Energy, the value of EIA's work is difficult to overstate. If you were to pick at random a news item or research study focused on the US energy system, it very likely includes a reference to EIA data. EIA products underpin our collective understanding of the US energy system and are a source of sound, unbiased data and analysis for decision makers in both the public and private sectors.

I want to underscore EIA's legal obligation to operate independently of policy positions taken within the Federal Government. EIA's independence and impartiality make it a trusted and reliable source of information on highly complex energy issues. If confirmed, my highest priority will be to maintain EIA's well-deserved reputation for impartiality.

My academic career as an engineer and energy systems modeler aligns with the analytical mission of EIA. After double-majoring in physics and environmental science and policy at Clark University, I obtained a PhD in Engineering and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University. My PhD research taught me to analyze complex energy issues at the intersection of engineering, economics, and public policy.

After graduation, I joined the Environmental Protection Agency where I developed expertise in energy systems modeling. Over time, it became clear to me that the prevailing approach to modeling within the international community was flawed. First, the models were opaque to outsiders. If models were cars, it was impossible to look under the hood and kick the tires. Second, modelers needed to do a better job quantifying future uncertainty and how it might affect model projections. Making models public and addressing future uncertainty not only makes modeling more scientific, but fulfills a moral imperative to inform stakeholders, decision makers, and the general public on issues that affect everyone's lives.

Improving the energy modeling process became my overarching focus when I began my faculty position at NC State University in 2008, a position I still hold today. Over the last decade, I have helped to lead the development of next-generation energy system modeling tools that are open source, transparent, and designed to deliver policy-relevant insights.

If I have the privilege of being confirmed, I would like to pursue several priorities that will enhance EIA's ability to fulfill its mission in the twenty-first century. These priorities are grounded in my experience as a consumer of EIA products over the last 20+ years, and mirror priorities highlighted by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

First, EIA should strive to make its products more accessible and transparent. This includes making EIA models open source, and integrating different data streams into real-time, online dashboards. Transparency and accessibility engender trust, foster understanding, and allow stakeholders to make better use of EIA products.

Second, EIA's modeling capability should be expanded to examine a wider range of future scenarios that include the full spectrum of available fuels and technologies. The models should be tested under a wider range of assumptions to better evaluate potential outcomes pertaining to cost, emissions, reliability, and security. As part of this effort, EIA also needs to engage in cross agency coordination to examine emerging trends in the energy economy, like the demand for critical minerals.

Third, EIA data and analysis can provide additional insight into energy trends and the resulting impacts on communities, including the accessibility and reliability of energy supply and the effect of price changes on energy poverty.

I am thrilled by the opportunity to lead the Energy Information Administration. As a country, we face many critical energy challenges over the next several decades, and EIA will play a crucial role in that ongoing discussion. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on a non-partisan basis to advance our collective understanding of our past, present, and future energy system.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.