

Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and distinguished members of this committee: good morning and thank you for having me. I am Kyle Ardoin, and I serve as Louisiana's 44th Secretary of State. I am especially pleased to be speaking before you today because Louisiana has unique experience in election preparation. Not only did we have to deal with the challenges of COVID-19, as did my colleagues across the country, but in 2020 we were faced with running the presidential election in the aftermath of Tropical Storms Cristobal and Beta and Hurricanes Laura, Marco, Delta and Zeta—the last of which made landfall in Louisiana a mere six days prior to Election Day. In 2021, we were faced with another major storm in Hurricane Ida, which devastated parts of our state just six weeks prior to our statewide elections. Thankfully, we were able to execute all of these elections due to the hard work of our election staff across the state, and in cooperation with other state agencies.

However, this year's federal election presents a new challenge: the supply chain backlog that has and will continue to affect paper supplies across the country. Let me be clear: this is a crisis

that demands immediate attention and bipartisan action. It is not an exaggeration to say that if this situation is not handled, it could lead to a serious erosion in the confidence in our elections.

In Louisiana alone, our office had to contact every paper producer in North America—not just the United States—to ensure we will have the supplies we need. Louisiana uses a much smaller amount of paper than other states for elections. In the 2020 presidential election, 7% of the 2.1 million votes cast in Louisiana were by paper. If we had to piecemeal the supplies we need to execute the election, how will other states with greater needs manage? In the most recent midterm election in 2018, the EAC’s Election Administration and Voting Survey stated that over 42 million mail ballots were transmitted across the country. Additionally, over 85% of the nation’s jurisdictions use paper or a paper component in their voting system.

Furthermore, we must consider that states need paper supplies for mail-ballot envelopes, voter instructions, or poll books, and may need special types of paper to comply with their state’s law.

In 2017, the Department of Homeland Security declared election infrastructure as “critical infrastructure.” Then-Secretary of

DHS Jeh Johnson said: “The designation makes it clear both domestically and internationally that election infrastructure enjoys all the benefits and protections of critical infrastructure that the U.S. government has to offer.” That is why I have asked the federal government to activate the Defense Production Act to ensure that paper suppliers prioritize election-related materials ahead of November’s election. I also believe that there are other innovative ways to ensure ample supply for state and local jurisdictions, including the use of tax incentives to urge paper suppliers to prioritize election-based supplies.

Furthermore, just as many jurisdictions increased voting by mail in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, states should consider prioritizing in-person voting due to the persistent supply chain issues in 2022. Jurisdictions should encourage voters to vote in-person and, to the extent possible, reserve absentee-by-mail voting for those that must vote-by-mail. These supply chain issues are also affecting other aspects of our election administration efforts, especially as it relates to the transportation of election supplies and machines. In 2021, the vehicle shortage forced Louisiana to seek delivery trucks in states as far away as Georgia. With four months remaining until

the federal 45-day UOCOVA ballot deadline and less than six months until Election Day, there can be no delay for action.

Additionally, we are continuing to work on shoring up our cybersecurity defenses against bad actors, both foreign and domestic. A recent advisory from cybersecurity authorities in the United States and our allies have warned that we should expect “malicious cyber actors-including state-sponsored advanced persistent threat groups-to step up their targeting.” The advisory specifically warned that these groups or individuals would be targeting managed service providers, or MSPs. I have long spoken out about the need for MSPs to be open and transparent with their government partners, and in Louisiana we championed legislation to require more accountability from MSPs that operate within our state. Without clear communication between MSPs and the jurisdictions they service, we cannot effectively fight those that wish to do us harm. In a world that is increasingly interconnected, and with our enemies seeking to undermine our elections, it is more important than ever that we work together, public and private entities, local, state, and federal governments, and across

agencies, to protect our critical infrastructure from new and existing threats.

These challenges are in addition to the aging population of poll workers, rampant false information, and threats to election officials and staff. However, working as partners, we can devise solutions to these pressing issues. We have no choice but to succeed-the American people expect and deserve no less.