

**Opening Statement of Skye L. Perryman, JD
President and CEO, Democracy Forward Foundation
Before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Acting Ranking Member for having me here today. At the outset, let me offer my condolences to all of you for the recent loss of your colleague, Congressman Gerry Connolly.

I am here today as a lawyer and as the President and CEO of Democracy Forward Foundation, which is a non-partisan, national legal organization that is committed to achieving a nation and a democracy that enables all people living in America to thrive. We represent people and communities that make up the very fabric of our nation on a *pro bono* basis in federal and state courts and regulatory bodies.

I know this hearing is focused on immigration. I want to say at the outset that the nation needs comprehensive immigration reform. I also will note that the rhetoric that the President and his allies use to talk about people in this country is inaccurate, overly politicized, and not solutions oriented.

Fundamentally, Democracy Forward Foundation's work centers on the premise that when the government does its job and works for the people, our society is stronger. And when our government strays from this purpose, ignoring the U.S. Constitution and a fidelity to people's rights, our democracy and our people are in danger.

Right now, the American people are in danger and our democracy is in crisis.

We – all of us as Americans and all members of this Committee – need to remember who we are. We now have a President who has proclaimed without irony that he is a king in a nation that next year will celebrate 250 years since it threw off the reins of monarchy. Since inauguration day, the President and his administration have acted beyond the lawful bounds of executive authority, usurping the power of Congress, seeking to eliminate due process of law, ignoring court orders, and targeting people, civil society organizations, and lawyers.

These anti-democratic and authoritarian actions present overall threats to our nation's democracy as well as to the safety and security of people living in America.

That is why Democracy Forward Foundation has filed more than 70 legal actions in federal courts, offices, and agencies since Inauguration to protect the American people's rights. From

stopping the President's federal funding freezes, to blocking the decimation of the Department of Education, to safeguarding due process, to challenging DOGE and Elon Musk's attempts to access the personal data of individual Americans – Democracy Forward is in court every day on behalf of those in red states and blue states, those in urban areas, rural communities, and on behalf of people of all ideologies and identities.

Our work demonstrates that the U.S. Constitution is here for everyone.

This administration's tactics regarding immigration enforcement shock the conscience. They have led us to file litigation on behalf of religious communities to prevent ICE from entering houses of worship to indiscriminately conduct enforcement operations. We are litigating against policies that prolong the detention of immigrant children without their families. And of course, we are challenging the lack of due process afforded to our clients – men disappeared through an unlawful agreement between the government of El Salvador and the Department of State.

All told, the courts have ruled against the current administration more than 170 times in less than 200 days because of the administration's fast-moving harms and flagrant violations of the law and our Constitution. And, while this is a dire situation, our work demonstrates that the American people are determined to protect their rights, to use lawful and peaceful means of petitioning their government, and, when necessary, to hold their government accountable.

Last week was June 6, the anniversary of the day that American troops landed on the beaches of Normandy in World War II. I am the mother of a nine year old boy whose great grandfather served in that battle and many others throughout the European theater. But in June of 2025, we don't need to be in Normandy to defend our democracy. We must do it in these halls, in the courts, and in communities across the country. And, yes, we must remember the historical commitment we made at the end of that War to advance democracy and to ensure that we never turn our back on people fleeing persecution.

I provide this testimony with the sincere hope and belief that it is through understanding the nature and extent of the crisis of our freedoms and our democracy in this moment that we can turn the tide and build toward a more democratic and just future.

Thank you.