

Mindy Brashears, PhD

2025 Senate Nomination Statement

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for inviting me here today to testify before you. I am honored to be nominated by President Trump and for the support of Secretary Brooke Rollins to be considered for the position of Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food Safety. I want to thank Congressman and good friend, Jodey Arrington, for the kind introduction.

If confirmed, I would be honored to serve the citizens of the United States a second time in this position to ensure that the United States maintains the safest food supply in the world. I have dedicated my career to studying food safety and focusing on the safety of the meat and poultry supply.

Today I am blessed to have many people here to support me. My husband, Todd, my daughters, Bailey, Reagan and Presley and my daughter-in-law, Victoria, my mom, Becky and many other family members, colleagues and friends.

I have spent my professional career preparing for this role. I grew up on a farm in West Texas where we raised cattle and cotton. My parents instilled in me a love of agriculture and a strong work ethic. I was active in FFA and 4H in high school and went to college on a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo scholarship. I hold a BS in Food Technology from Texas Tech University and MS and PhD degrees from Oklahoma State University in Food Science, specializing in food microbiology. I have spent 25 years as a research scientist studying foodborne pathogens in meat and poultry environments while simultaneously mentoring the next generation of food safety leaders as a university professor.

When I held the position of Under Secretary for Food Safety in the first Trump administration, I had the opportunity not only to put my technical knowledge into practice, but also had the chance to implement science-based food safety policies to advance the mission of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. If confirmed to this position, it will be a top priority for me to make decisions based on sound science and to develop and implement policies that are scientifically strong and practical, and most importantly, that will result in a meaningful impact on public health outcomes.

Some of my greatest accomplishments during my first time in this office were modernizing swine and egg inspection systems at FSIS and establishing a culture of data-driven, science-based decision making at the agency. I also oversaw programs such as laboratory accreditation and spearheaded programs that improved the efficiency of testing and sampling methods for the agency. I was committed to strengthening our workforce through recruitment programs at Universities and Vet Schools. Additionally, I developed strong

connections with other agencies within USDA and across the government including collaborations with FDA and CDC.

Since leaving the position the first time, I have spent the past four years re-directing my research program at Texas Tech to generate data that is practical to inform public policy. I have been on the front lines of food safety, which has provided me with the firsthand knowledge to effectively lead the food safety work at USDA. I have spent many days collecting samples in beef, pork and poultry plants mapping pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli* and *Listeria* throughout the various stages of processing, from the lairage areas when the livestock first enters the establishment to when the final product enters commerce. In our research lab, we've developed new methods and interventions to better understand and target key pathogens of concern. My team and I have been laser focused on how to make the meat and poultry supply safer for consumers.

In addition to my professional experiences, my practical life roles as a mother, a wife and a daughter have given me a strong perspective as a consumer. Additionally, my faith in God is the foundation for decision-making in my life. I want to thank Him for my family, my education and experiences and this opportunity that has been placed before me. Ultimate wisdom comes from above and I will rely on this personally and professionally.

Members of the Committee, I appreciate the time you have taken to be here today. I am humbled by the nomination and would be honored to serve as Under Secretary. My experience and technical expertise have prepared me for this role and if confirmed, I will make data-driven decisions to ensure food safety of the U.S. meat, poultry and processed egg supply.

Thank you for your time today and for considering me for this important role. I look forward to answering your questions.