Statement of Colette S. Peters, former Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons

I was appointed Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons on August 2, 2022. As of January 19, 2025, I was the longest-tenured active correctional director in the country, having served as a corrections director of adult and juvenile systems since 2009. On January 20, 2025, at 2:54 p.m. the Acting Attorney General sent me an email removing me from my career Senior Executive Service service position, effective immediately.

I have filed an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board seeking rescission of the removal order.

I did not resign my position. I had no prior notice of the action taken against me, my electronic devices were shut down immediately, my security clearance was terminated, and I was barred from accessing the FBOP headquarters building even to remove my personal effects.

Prior to my removal, countless members of Congress, along with the Government Accountability Office and various USDOJ Inspector General reports had sounded the alarm about excessive turnover in FBOP's leadership, proclaiming that instability was a top driver of many of the Bureau's shortcomings. Prior to my appointment, the Bureau had 6 directors in 6 years, followed by a bipartisan call for consistent leadership.

As a dedicated public servant, I had every intention of staying on at FBOP, and stood ready to work with the incoming administration, bringing my decades-long track record of bi-partisan work to continue to deliver substantial corrections and criminal justice reform. The Bureau's employees and those in its care and custody deserved sustained engagement from a leader committed to the FBOP's mission.

I am proud of my tenure as the FBOP Director, and have appreciated broad support in my career from Democrats and Republicans who have both recognized my efforts to make prisons safe for corrections professionals and those in our care; to ensure successful reentry into society; and to increase the longevity and sustainability of careers in corrections. The Bureau has made incredible progress over the past 2.5 years on the most intractable problems it has faced. Here is a public summary of our work. Some highlights include:

- After decades of stagnant and declining employment numbers, we improved our recruitment and retention efforts and in just 2.5 years we moved the agency from being staffed at 85% to 93% overall.
- We focused on employee wellness, because the average lifespan of a corrections professional after 20 years on the job is 58. One in 3 have PTSD; which results in anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and high rates of divorce. Over 90% of corrections professionals are overweight or obese and suffering from hypertension and pre-hypertension. We expanded the use of our Crisis Support Teams to include ongoing and proactive wellness support throughout the bureau. We expanded employee assistance plan (EAP) services to retirees and required that EAP counselors be certified. We created a Chief Employee Wellness Administrator who oversees employee wellness across the country.

- We established a 5, 10, and 15 year plan to manage the $3 billion Maintenance and Repair backlog, which is plaguing the FBOP and leaving employees and Adults in Custody working in and living in dilapidated facilities.
- We turned around or closed units and institutions that were not operating at the level of correctional excellence I demanded, including some that were deplorable with employees engaging in criminal and inhumane activities.
- We rooted out misconduct and held those responsible accountable, building up trust with the Justice Department, Congress, the media, stakeholders, and advocates.
- In partnership with USDOJ's Office of Inspector General, we investigated institutions we were concerned about and then held people accountable when we uncovered misconduct and contraband.
- Finally under my leadership, FBOP worked tirelessly and successfully to implement the First Step Act (FSA). From January 2020 to July 2024, more than 175,000 individuals completed more than 600,000 evidence-based programs and productive activities. In just the last two years, FBOP has released-to-supervision nearly 40,000 individuals thanks to FSA time credits. Those released had a substantially lower rate of recidivism (12.4%) compared to the overall return rate to FBOP, state, or local custody (49%).

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the FBOP Director, to represent the nearly 40,000 unsung heroes who serve as corrections professionals in our nation's system and to create environments that are safer and more humane resulting in better public safety outcomes. I deeply regret this Administration's short-sighted decision to remove me from a position in which I succeeded and to which I remain committed. I believe this decision has done a great disservice to the Bureau's mission, employees, and those in FBOP's care and custody. They are the reason I have filed this appeal.