Honorable Member
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

March 27, 2025

Dear Senator:

The undersigned 47 investor, worker, consumer, civil rights, and public interest organizations urge you to oppose the nomination of Paul Atkins to serve as Chair of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Mr. Atkins' conflicts of interest, approach and opposition to the critical investor protections and post-crisis reforms embodied in the Dodd-Frank Act make him uniquely unsuited to helm an agency with the critical mission to safeguard investors, equities markets, and the broader economy.

The SEC is the principal regulator of the U.S. securities markets and its statutory core mandate is to protect investors from market manipulation, fraud, and corporate malfeasance. Established in 1934, the Commission's regulatory and enforcement decisions, made under the leadership and guidance of the Chair, directly impact the health and stability of the U.S. economy, investors, workers, pension funds, and families saving for retirement. The Chair of the SEC must be able to steer the Commission and advance its critical mission to protect investors and maintain the stability and integrity of U.S. capital markets.

Mr. Atkins' record of support for the interests of powerful corporate actors even at great cost to ordinary investors and working families does not reflect the approach needed to lead the SEC. He supported the financial industry's deregulatory demands as an SEC Commissioner from 2002 to 2008 that led to the 2008 financial crisis. He voted for the deregulatory actions promoted by Wall Street that enabled large financial institutions to take risky positions and he voted against enforcement actions to pursue companies that violated securities laws. The combination of deregulation and weak enforcement ultimately resulted in calamitous market failures that precipitated a stock market collapse and protracted economic recession. The bipartisan Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission found that the SEC's record during Mr. Atkins' tenure was one of deregulation and lax oversight of Wall Street that facilitated the financial crisis. Millions of families lost their life savings, their retirement nest eggs, and their homes as a result of the SEC's failure to effectively and adequately regulate the securities markets.

Mr. Atkins received "special mention" for his contributions to the Project 2025 recommendations to weaken the SEC and other financial regulatory bodies. These recommendations *are* the financial industry's deregulatory demands and allowing Mr. Atkins to lead the SEC would sacrifice the rights and protections of investors, pensions, and retirement savers to the interests of Wall Street trading houses, big banks and big business, hedge funds, and private equity firms. The Project 2025 litany of financial deregulation includes allowing private equity to prey upon retirement accounts, exempting private credit from oversight, terminating the consolidated audit trail necessary to track securities trades and enforce market manipulation rules, eviscerating shareholder rights, eliminating the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board and Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, and more.

If confirmed as Chair, Mr. Atkins would once again pursue the deregulatory agenda promoted by the financial industry and large corporations to avoid accountability and erode the SEC's willingness and ability to appropriately enforce securities laws to protect investors and market integrity. This will create the danger of serious economic harms for investors, workers, and households across the country.

Mr. Atkins' has sought to limit shareholders' ability to hold firms accountable. He has expressed hostility towards shareholder rights, saying investors who file shareholder proposals on important issues such as workplace safety, labor rights, racial equity, political spending, and climate risks are somehow seeking to "co-opt or disenfranchise" companies. Further, he supports the practices of companies lavishing rewards on their executives — such as stock buybacks and timing stock options when share prices are low — that can come at the expense of other shareholders, the firm's long-term value creation, workers and a broadly prosperous economy. He has opposed commonsense transparency measures that investors want and need to make prudent decisions. Climate change poses significant operational and financial risks to companies as well as to investors, and pensions and institutional investors want to know how firms are addressing these risks. He opposes the climate risk disclosure rule promulgated by the SEC despite the broad-based support by 95 percent of institutional investors for its main provisions.

The nomination of Mr. Atkins also presents significant conflict of interest concerns. After he left the SEC, he founded and led Patomak Global Partners, which provides regulatory compliance guidance and other strategic advice to banks, financial technology firms, derivatives traders, multinational conglomerates, mutual funds, private equity and venture capital firms, and cryptocurrency and digital assets companies. In short, his clients include firms that are or could be regulated by the SEC and Mr. Atkins will be powerfully situated to advance their goals of lax regulatory oversight and weak enforcement. Specific conflicts of interest — such as consideration of potential enforcement against the firm's clients — are likely to allow Mr. Atkins to choose whether to protect investors, retirees, workers' pensions, and the market or advance the financial interests of those clients. This danger is made particularly acute by the steps the SEC has already taken under its new leadership to tighten Commissioner control of enforcement decisions, which will make it easier for enforcement actions they do not favor to be buried.

These conflicts are especially apparent in two policy areas: private markets and cryptocurrency. Private market offerings are opaque, and very often high fee and high-risk. Investors in private markets, including workers' pension funds are routinely misled about fund performance, risks, and fees. Failing to take action to ensure adequate and accurate disclosures and prevent dangerous conflicts of interest puts working families' retirement savings at risk. Opening the floodgates to the private equity industry's demand to weaken investor protections so that they can sell high risk high fee products to whole new sets of retail investors - as promoted in project

2025 and in numerous industry statements - would put still more investors at grave risk, and still further expand private funds' dominance over areas of the economy ranging from healthcare to housing.Mr. Atkins' firm represents private equity and mutual fund firms that are pushing and would benefit from these deregulatory approaches.

Second, Mr. Atkins has been an unabashed proponent of greater SEC accommodation of cryptocurrency that would benefit Patomak's clients but could expose investors to fraud and market manipulation and pose substantial risk to the financial system and economy. Mr. Atkins was an advisor to the crypto exchange FTX prior to its 2022 collapse that resulted in investors and consumers losing billions of dollars. FTX CEO Sam Bankman-Fried was convicted of financial crimes including fraud, money laundering, and conspiracy, but Mr. Atkins blamed the collapse on regulators failing to weaken securities rules to embrace crypto. Mr. Atkins' conflicts and record promise an approach to crypto regulations, guidance, and enforcement that will permit widespread fraud, cybercrime, and market manipulation, and that will put investors and market integrity at grave risk.

The Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission must be a leader committed to the public interest who fulfills the statutory mission of the agency to regulate securities markets to protect investors; promote healthy and transparent markets; prevent fraud, market manipulation, and misconduct; and safeguard the economy from financial crises. Paul Atkins' record has demonstrated a failure to meet these fundamental standards.

We respectfully urge you to oppose his nomination.

Sincerely,

Accountable.US
AFL-CIO
Alabama Interfaith Power & Light
American Association for Justice
American Federation of Teachers
Americans for Financial Reform
Better Markets
CapEQ
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
Chevedden Corporate Governance
Citizen Action/Illinois
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Community Capital Advisors
Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)
Consumer Federation of America
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Economic Action Maryland Fund
Friends of the Earth United States

Green America
Health and Safety Associates
Impact Investors, Inc
Maine People's Alliance
Maryknoll Sisters
National Employment Law Project
Natural Investments
Nia Impact Capital
Open MIC
Oregon Consumer League
Private Equity Stakeholder Project
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Public Citizen
School Sisters of Notre Dame Collective Investment Fund
Service Employees International Union
SHARE (Shareholder Association for Research & Education)
SharePower Responsible Investing
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mary Reparatrix
SOC Investment Group
Stand.earth
Take on Wall Street
The People's Justice Council
Third Act
United for Respect
Unlocking America's Future
20/20 Vision
350Hawaii
350Juneau--Climate Action for Alaska