

Written Statement
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Chairman Kean, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to testify today on our relationship with the Republic of Moldova. Under the constant threat of Russian aggression, interference, and disinformation and with the prospect of EU membership hanging in the balance, this is an historic moment of challenge and opportunity in a region critical to our national interests.

Every step of the way, Congress has been a powerful partner on our Moldova strategy – from the funding appropriated for critical assistance to the high-level engagement and advocacy from members, including members of this Committee, to advance our common objective for a Moldova that is free, whole, democratic, and secure. Members of Congress have also been key interlocuters with the Moldovan government, with recent visits to Chisinau from Senators Shaheen and Murphy, where they met with President Sandu and discussed ways to combat disinformation in Moldova.

Moldova's upcoming Presidential election and simultaneous national referendum on EU accession represent an historic inflection point for the people of Moldova. Amidst the devastating impact of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, President Sandu's government and the Moldovan people have taken bold steps to build a more democratic, secure, and prosperous future, firmly anchored in the West.

A core objective of our strategy is to ensure that Moldova's course toward integration with the EU is irreversible.

It won't be easy. But with continued strong support from the United States and our European partners and allies, Moldova can succeed. Our strategy comprises three main lines of effort: 1. High-level engagement with Moldova's leaders to signal our strong political support; 2. Assistance to help Moldova bolster its security and territorial integrity, achieve energy independence, and integrate its economy with the West; and finally, 3. Sanctions and other measures to help Moldova meet and master the challenge of Russian malign influence designed to knock the country off its rightful path to the West.

When President Sandu was elected in December 2020, she ran on a bold vision of fighting corruption and bringing her country closer to the West. During the past four years, Moldova has made remarkable strides towards European Union accession, opening formal negotiations in June. U.S. assistance, including approximately \$824 million committed since February 2022, has played a significant role in advancing Moldova's rule-of-law, anti-corruption, energy, and economic progress in line with EU standards. We applaud Moldova's efforts on rule of law reform, including improved judicial and prosecutorial vetting. There is still work to be done and we must continue to support their reform efforts.

Fortunately, European and G7 partners have also provided billions of dollars to Moldova to accomplish similar goals. Since 2021, the EU has given approximately \$2.4 billion in grants and loans to support socioeconomic development and reforms in Moldova.

The Moldovan people have made a courageous choice to seek integration with Europe, particularly in the face of the Kremlin's intensified hybrid threats and ongoing efforts to keep Moldova in its "sphere of influence." The Russian government has invested significant time, energy, and money to thwart Moldova's

sovereign choice to build closer ties with the West. They have done this using a variety of tactics, including disinformation campaigns, malicious cyber activities, and efforts to funnel illicit funds into the country in an attempt to undermine democratic processes, including elections.

We must continue to help Moldova to counter Russian malign influence. This year we sanctioned Marina Tauber and Evgenia Gutul who engaged in blatant interference activities in recent elections in Moldova with Russian support. These sanctions send a strong message that the United States will not tolerate threats to free and fair elections. We recently cooperated with Canada and the U.K. to release downgraded information that showed Russia's current plans to illicitly sway the upcoming elections and foment unrest if a pro-Kremlin candidate is not elected. And we are working to strengthen Moldova's security in all spheres, from elections, to border protection, to energy, to cyber.

We thank all of you in this Committee for your strong backing of Moldova during this critical period. The people of Moldova have shown remarkable resilience in the face of unrelenting Russian pressure. They now face a critical decision that will determine their future as a sovereign, independent country. Together with

our European partners, we will continue to provide the engagement and support Moldova needs to achieve our collective strategic interest in a Europe free, whole, and at peace.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today – I look forward to your questions.