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Good afternoon to the chairman and the committee. My name is Catherine Riley, I was born and raised in Sitka, Alaska, I work in policy engagement and on a troll tender, and I oppose the confirmation of Jason Brune as the commissioner of the DEC.

During his State of the State address to these chambers just two days ago, Gov. Dunleavy stated that the reason that he was elected was so that he could deliver on the campaign promises that represent the true desires of Alaskans. One of his promises is to “restore public trust in government and elected officials”.

In the less than 48 hours after that speech, we have already seen the resignation of the proposed commissioner of administration, Jonathan Quick, after State legislators discovered that he had lied extensively on his resume. Almost simultaneously, it was revealed that Art Chance, who had been offered a job in the Department of Administration as a policy adviser, declined his offer of employment after his history of vulgar, antagonistic, and misogynistic social media posts was exposed.

I would like to thank the legislature for doing their due diligence in vetting candidates who are meant to occupy the highest realms of power in this state. As for the governor’s campaign promise, personally, I have experienced a decline my trust for government and elected officials in recent days – which is saying something, because it’s not like I had high expectations anyways. My expectations were low from the minute Jason Brune was announced as the new commissioner-designee of the DEC. Mr. Brune was the head of public affairs and government relations for Anglo American during the time that they co-owned the Pebble project with Northern Dynasty Minerals. He has advocated for the project throughout his social media and testified in support at public meetings and on the news. As DEC commissioner, he will be in charge of permitting for Pebble, how those permits are enforced, and ensuring that the project complies with the State’s air and water quality, environmental health, and spill response programs (which, as he seemed to imply during his testimony, he thinks are too extensive and over-reaching). Are we supposed to trust that Mr. Brune will be an impartial and fair arbiter of the facts and consider equally the concerns of all Alaskans regarding this hugely controversial and important project? Are we asking too much to not put a known pebble proponent in charge of permitting for the mine? Our governor is shirking his duty and promise to restore public trust in government, and thus we are depending on this committee to do that job, and vote no for Jason Brune as DEC commissioner.

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