

**Shelby J. Brown**

**Testimony before Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee**

**Tuesday, March 4, 2014 noon**

Good afternoon, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, and the distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

My name is Shelby Brown, and I am the nominee to serve as the Executive Administrator of the Office of Governmental Accountability, an office in which I have served for the past 38 days. I succeed David Guay to become the second Executive Administrator this newly formed agency has ever had.

My role as Executive Administrator is to manifest the functions outlined in Public Act 11-48; this is the legislation that created the Office of Governmental Accountability and consolidated nine previously separate oversight agencies under its umbrella. As the Executive Administrator, I serve as the head of the agency and am responsible for ensuring the provision of consolidated personnel, payroll, affirmative action, administrative, business office and information technology services as associated with these functions, for nine divisions that make up the Office of Governmental Accountability. All of the divisions of OGA retain independent decisions-making authority in their missions, budgets, and hiring.

I am honored to sit before you today and to be considered for this specific nomination. As an administrator in public service, I am particularly proud to be appointed to an agency that is concerned with the issues of integrity in public service. My own personal and professional decisions reflect a commitment to this value as well as to excellence, collaboration, and openness. These have been hallmarks of my career over the past fourteen plus years that I have served the people of Connecticut. Please allow me to take a few minutes to tell you a little about my career and the path I have taken to arrive here today.

I pursued my undergraduate degree at Trinity College, while working as a community organizer in the Frog Hollow section of Hartford, helping people gain access to quality, affordable housing and better educational opportunities for their children. I chose to study Economics because I was curious about the way that resources were distributed in society and how the outcomes for people of color could be improved. I had wonderful summer learning opportunities, opportunities that advancing my knowledge of leadership, community service and economic development; one summer I spent in Newark, NJ as a community development intern working on grass-roots organizing, character education with school teachers, and service to the poor. Another summer, I spent in Spain advancing my bilingual ability and exploring the expressions of art and culture that shape the Latino people the world around. Although I entered Trinity as an adult re-starting my academic career, I was blessed by my Trinity years. They provided an opportunity for me to develop leadership skills and to become recognized as a leader. By the time I earned my bachelor's degree in Economics from Trinity, I had also acquired a well-rounded education in human service and community and organizational development.

I have extended my knowledge of leadership and community building by studying and experiencing democratic deliberation and public engagement. I used my experience as a community organizer to get other people involved in the process of expressing their choices and interests through the avenues our democracy avails. I helped people express their voices, at times by using my own ability to articulate clearly, at other times by opening doors and standing with them. For example, I co-founded The Democracy Imperative, an organization of academic and community-based educators who promote the skill of deliberative democracy. We teach people to participate in their communities in public forums and dialogue-to-action projects. In Hartford, I worked with the Hartford Public Library to help find a voice for children of incarcerated parents. In Glastonbury, I advocated for parents of color whose children struggled in the school system. I also worked with several community groups engaged in Community Conversations on Race. I trained and facilitated groups of community leaders in Indianapolis and Newark, student leadership groups at Wheaton College, Skidmore College, and MIT, as well. In all, my work as a community leader is vast and included being a Girl Scout leader, diversity educator, and education advocate.

In April 1999, I began working in Human Resources at the CT Community-Technical College System Office. I was hired to develop a Y2K compliant Attendance System, which I did. I used my knowledge of technology and education to develop technical documentation and train hundreds of community college payroll, human resources, fiscal and management people. I continued to work in this capacity for four years. Then for the next eight years, I served as a Human Resources Director providing advice and consultancy to the system Executive Director, Human Resource Directors, College Presidents, and Labor Relations Attorneys on complex human capital management, performance, policy, and labor relations issues. I managed a team of professionals engaged in providing support, training, research, and collaboration to business partners in payroll, finance, information technology, and student services and I served as subject-matter expert on adult learning and development, and employee retention and succession.

In 2007, I decided to pursue my Masters degree; I applied and was accepted into Harvard University. I was able to take a sabbatical from my assignment at the Board of Trustees to attend Harvard and obtain my Master's degree in Higher Education Management in one year. A year later, fully convinced of my ability to become a high-level leader in public education, I began studying for my doctorate degree in Management at the University of Maryland. My programmatic focus was Public Education, Policy and Administration. My research focus was Management Succession and the challenges it presents for changing Higher Education culture. Although I have not completed my dissertation, I have completed all of my coursework and exams toward this degree. I have also obtained education from Fielding Graduate University in Deliberation and Public Engagement, and I had availed myself of two important State of Connecticut opportunities for professional development. I successfully completed the Human Resources Management Program and the Aspiring Leaders Executive Leadership Program.

In 2011, legislation was enacted to merge community colleges with state universities and Charter Oak College (the state's online university). Up to this point, I had experienced two significant shifts in leadership in higher education, but overall my work experience was primarily within an environment that was enormously stable. This merger brought about, without a doubt, the most

significant changes in leadership and overall direction that these institutions had experienced in my tenure. When I was appointed the role of Associate Director of Employee Relations and Chief Learning Officer, it was in recognition of the important function I played in maintaining operational stability and productivity as upper management underwent three reorganizations. This experience prepared me to be the leader that the Office of Governmental Accountability would eventually need. I learned to maintain operational functionality as legislative and political changes unfolded and uncertainty prevailed. I learned to identify and exploit an agency's strengths and opportunities, and to build the staff's morale when it was most important that everyone bring their best to the task at hand. By the time I applied for the position as Executive Administrator of the Office of Governmental Accountability, I was seeking an opportunity to bring the plethora of skills I had developed to the task of greater, more visible leadership.

I also looked forward to bringing other aspects of my background to bear on the challenges this Office faced. This included my many years of experience in community development, diversity education, and organizational development, as well as my experience as an Affirmative Action officer and my experience as an educator, all of which would be beneficial in helping people work across differences to achieve important aims. What I have learned in the month that I have served the Office of Governmental Accountability is that all of these skills and my long history of public service are valuable assets in this role.

In closing, I believe that my unique qualifications make me the best candidate for the position of the Executive Administrator of the Office of Governmental Accountability. My resume demonstrates the breadth of my education and experience in each of the functional areas the office is concerned with. I would also like for you to know that I have a vision for moving this Office to a place of productive and harmony, effectively serving its statutory mission and thriving in the role of serving the nine agencies under its umbrella. I look forward to leading this effort, while supporting the divisions in pursuing their missions. I would appreciate your endorsement of my nomination to this role. Thank you for taking the time to become acquainted with my qualifications. I welcome any questions you may have.

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