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Verbal Testimony
Reliable, Flexible, Responsive: Overview of the
Private-Sector-Led United States Standardization System

Public Hearing – European Parliament Committee on the
Internal Market and Consumer Protection

“European Standardisation: Improving competitiveness
through a new regulatory framework”

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Good morning, everyone.

My name is Amy Marasco, and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the American National Standards Institute. I am speaking on behalf of ANSI today, and want to share with you that Joe Bhatia, ANSI’s president and CEO, is very appreciative of this invitation to testify as part of today’s Public Hearing. Joe asked me to convey his apologies that he could not be here in person due to the fact that he is currently in Cuba attending a meeting of the Pan American Standards Commission’s Board of Directors. All of us at ANSI appreciate this opportunity to speak with you and look forward to future involvement with the Committee.

For those of you who are not familiar with us, ANSI is a nearly century-old, private, non-profit organization that administers and coordinates the U.S. voluntary standards and conformity assessment system. We are also the U.S. member body to the International Organization for Standardization, or ISO, and via our U.S. National Committee, to the International Electrotechnical Commission, or IEC. We also represent the U.S. in a number of regional fora.

I am here today to share a brief overview of the U.S. approach to standardization. Our system is often referred to as “bottom up.” That means that standards users drive and define standardization activities. We rely upon the involvement and cooperation of diverse stakeholders – from industry, from government, and from consumer groups – that may come to the standards-setting table with very different points of view.

We believe that this diversity is what gives our system its strength. And a strong standards system is absolutely linked to success in the global economy.

Over one hundred thousand standards have been developed in the United States by standards developing organizations, consortia, and thousands of committees. Over ten thousand of these standards have been submitted to ANSI and approved as American National Standards, demonstrating that these documents follow our *Essential Requirements* and were developed through an open, balanced, and consensus-based process.

Participation in voluntary consensus standards development is open to any materially affected stakeholder. Government agencies, businesses, consumer groups, and more – everyone has the opportunity to be a part of the process.

Every one of ANSI's largest accredited standards developers is focused on ensuring that small-to-medium enterprises – or SMEs – have the opportunity to participate. In some cases, over half of the individuals participating in technical committees work for SMEs. Their input ensures that standards include the latest technologies, innovative approaches, and best practices.

Many SDOs provide web-based resources that enable participation by SMEs regardless of travel, time, or budget restrictions. Using these web-based tools has another added benefit – it can also speed up the standards development process. Similar engagement opportunities are used to ensure that consumers are able to participate.

The U.S. standardization system is private-sector led. However, it is important to acknowledge that the U.S. government is a tremendous user of standards, and participates actively in standards development work.

ANSI has always worked to forge a strong partnership between the private and public sectors, and one of the best examples of this partnership is the *National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act*. This law directs U.S. federal agencies to rely upon voluntary consensus standards and to participate in private-sector led standards development activities.

Since the law was passed in the mid-1990s, standards have helped the government by increasing operational efficiency, avoiding duplication of effort, and reducing compliance and procurement costs.

Nearly 10,000 standards have been incorporated by reference into U.S. government regulation. And according to the NTTAA and its accompanying document, OMB Circular A-119, certain attributes must be present for a standard to be referenced. Openness, balance, consensus, due process, appeals and a RAND (reasonable and non-discriminatory) licensing framework for IPR – these are the hallmarks of the American National Standards process I mentioned earlier, and are important factors when a government agency is referencing standards in regulation.

Our *United States Standards Strategy* explores all of the concepts I have just laid out, and more. The document provides a single vision, purpose, and common framework that can be used by all U.S. stakeholders to achieve their respective standardization goals.

SDOs reference it. Government agencies rely on it. And industry representatives make use of it. Each group or industry sector is empowered to determine what constitutes successful standardization for its own stakeholders.

ANSI is fully committed to a system in which marketplace and societal needs determine the timing, content requirements, and number of standards that are to be developed under a voluntary, consensus-based, standards process. We believe that the same holds true for conformity assessment requirements.

As a companion document to the *Standards Strategy*, the *U.S. Conformity Assessment Principles* explain key aspects of the national compliance verification system.

In addition to advancing trade, we believe that standardization also enhances consumer health and safety; responds to critical and global priorities; and helps to advance U.S. viewpoints in regional and international arenas.

It is also important to note that, when U.S. stakeholders talk about global standardization, we are not just referring to ISO and IEC. Standards that adhere to the basic principles of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement are globally relevant. We wholly endorse the WTO TBT principles shown here.

Ultimately, our view is that there are multiple paths to a globally relevant standard. Whether developed by a national participation model, a direct participation model, or a consortia group, standards should be developed to meet societal and market needs. They should never act as barriers to trade.

The U.S. standardization system is open and accessible, and has frequently been used as a model for others to emulate. Our nation is committed not only to serving the interests of those within our borders, but also to supporting a global trading system that is balanced and without barriers.

On behalf of ANSI, we look forward to our continued partnership with the European community and we thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to your questions.