

**Seema Shrivastava-Patel**  
**Opening Statement: Senate Confirmation Hearing**  
**May 4, 2023**

**Below includes the full text, as prepared for delivery, of Seema Shrivastava-Patel opening statement at her confirmation hearing to chair the South Carolina Board of Health and Environmental Control.**

*Good morning, Chairman Verdin and members of the senate medical affairs committee. Thank you so much for inviting me here today to speak with you. I am also grateful to Governor McMaster for his confidence in me to lead this prestigious agency as board chair.*

*I am a daughter of immigrant parents who taught us about hard work and the American dream. They, along with my brother, moved to South Carolina in 1970. We were one of the first few Indian families in the state.*

*My parents fostered my commitment to service and taught us to give back to the incredible state that has given so much to us. I was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina. I graduated from USC where I met my wonderful husband, Ratish. We now live in Lexington with our two children Shivaan and Veera.*

*As a board member of DHEC for the past 5 years, I wish the citizens of South Carolina could see the commitment and dedication that DHEC staff has for the well-being of the people of this State. DHEC's vision is healthy people living in healthy communities, and it is exemplified on a daily basis by the agency's staff.*

*In South Carolina, DHEC and its team of talented and dedicated employees touches everyone's lives from birth to death. We collaborate with partners to achieve our vision by safeguarding the public's health, enhancing access to quality health care, and protecting the air, land, water and coast for current and future generations.*

*As a first-generation American of Indian Heritage and the first woman of color nominated to Chair the DHEC board, this is a very humbling moment for me. When I think of the amazing women who have done incredible work at DHEC for so many years, I'm in awe. To these trailblazers, please hear me when I say — I see you.*

*If you do not know, my mother worked at DHEC 43 years ago. She was unable to advance in her career because she wore a sari. Times have changed — and with a favorable vote from this committee — her daughter will get to help lead the agency.*

*I know that my business background — including a 20-year career in the convenience and food service industry and serving as president of Carolina Convenience Corporation as well as serving as the first president of the South Carolina Convenience and Petroleum marketers association —*

*will aid my ability to continue to lead the DHEC board and agency as we prepare for the future health and environmental needs of our state.*

*It is a privilege to be considered to lead the board of this agency. And, if confirmed, I proudly look forward to continuing to work alongside you and our state's leading health and environmental subject matter experts to advance our shared mission to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians.*

*Again, I would like to thank Governor McMaster for nominating me for this role. I would also like to thank my family for their support. In closing, I'd like to thank this committee for your time and consideration. I will answer any questions you may have that can assist you in your decision.*