

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Hearing on “LIFT America: Modernizing Our Infrastructure for the Future”  
May 22, 2019

Two of our Committee’s top priorities are strengthening the economy and combating climate change. One of the best ways for Congress to address both of these priorities now is by rebuilding and modernizing our nation’s crumbling infrastructure.

There is no better day for us to be having this hearing as the President and Democratic Leaders are meeting to follow-up on the President’s promise to come up with the \$2 trillion to pay for an infrastructure package.

Today, we are discussing the Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow’s America Act, or the LIFT America Act, which was introduced last week by all 31 Committee Democrats. This is a comprehensive bill that addresses critical infrastructure needs across our entire Committee’s jurisdiction. It will strengthen our economy for the future by creating good paying jobs and investing in critical clean energy, broadband, drinking water and health care infrastructure.

As we continue to develop a comprehensive plan to address climate change, there are many actions we can take now to reduce carbon pollution immediately.

LIFT America invests over \$33 billion for clean energy – including \$4 billion to upgrade the electric grid to accommodate more renewable energy and to make it more resilient. It includes \$1.5 billion to facilitate the replacement of leaking gas pipelines. It includes another \$4 billion for the expansion of renewable energy use, including the installation of solar panels in low-income and underserved communities. We also make significant investments in energy efficiency – helping states and communities make our public places more energy efficient, and helping homeowners weatherize their homes.

We also invest in the development of an electric vehicle charging network – something that is critical to tackling the greenhouse gas pollution coming from the transportation sector.

Collectively, all of these investments will help us take an important step in combating the climate crisis, while also strengthening our economy, creating good-paying jobs and providing some much-needed relief to consumers on their energy bills.

We also make significant investments in the expansion of broadband internet access. For too long, we’ve heard stories of the sorry state of our nation’s digital infrastructure that is simply leaving too many communities behind. We’ve heard about rural communities whose businesses can’t compete without access to the internet. We’ve heard about kids living in urban broadband deserts that have no other choice than to walk to a nearby McDonalds late on a school night to access WiFi just to do their homework. And we’ve heard the tragic calls to 9-1-1 of Americans that died during emergencies – because when they needed help – the system couldn’t find them.

The LIFT America Act takes bold steps to ensure a prosperous, fairer and safer tomorrow. It provides \$40 billion to fund connections to the internet for at least 98 percent of the country, and \$12 billion to upgrade our frail 9-1-1 infrastructure.

The LIFT America Act also makes critical investments in protecting human health and our environment.

We invest more than \$21 billion to protect Americans' drinking water, including \$2.5 billion to establish a new grant program allowing PFAS-affected communities to filter the toxic chemicals out of their water supplies. We also extend and increase authorizations for the drinking water State Revolving Fund (SRF) and other safe water programs that we authorized as part of the 2017 Safe Drinking Water Act.

We also further fund the Brownfields program, which has successfully helped communities clean up contaminated sites, remove public health threats and prepare the sites for development. This is another job creator that spurs local investment and revitalizes communities.

Finally, we address our nation's health care infrastructure. In recent years, we've heard of vulnerabilities in the physical structures, cybersecurity and data system technology in health care facilities. From cyberattacks in hospital data systems that threaten patient privacy to the literal corrosion of pipes in Indian Health Service facilities, our faltering health infrastructure is putting the wellbeing of patients at risk.

The LIFT America Act responds to these problems by investing in core public health resources at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and in state and local health departments. It also directly funds hospital infrastructure, Indian Health Service facilities, public health labs and behavioral health clinics to better protect human health.

This is an ambitious plan, but it is what is necessary and what is possible under the funding framework outlined by the President and Democratic Congressional leaders. We cannot wait any longer to modernize our nation's aging infrastructure, and I look forward to working with every member of this Committee to move this legislation forward.

Thank you.