

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
Hearing on “Building America’s Clean Future: Pathways to Decarbonize the Economy”  
July 24, 2019

One of this Committee’s top priorities is combating climate change. Yesterday I joined Chairmen Tonko and Rush, and other Committee Democrats, in announcing a bold plan to address the climate crisis by achieving a 100 percent clean economy by 2050.

Our plan is based on the science. International scientific experts tell us we must invest in clean technologies and initiate an aggressive, economy-wide effort now to achieve this goal. So yesterday we outlined a process for reaching that goal – and that process begins today with this hearing where we will examine the challenges and opportunities that exist for reducing greenhouse gas pollution from the major sectors of our economy.

Recent reports by U.S. scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change paint a grim picture if we do not get carbon pollution under control.

We are already experiencing record flooding, sea level rise, intense wildfires, extended drought and severe weather events that experts projected would come with increased warming. These events are taking a terrible toll on our communities, and we must act.

Transforming our economy is no easy task. There will be costs associated with a transformation of this scope, but the costs of inaction are extremely high and rising.

Fortunately, the calls for action continue to grow. This week, 28 global companies, representing a combined market capitalization of \$1.2 trillion, responded to the United Nations’ call to action by committing to the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

As we will hear from our witnesses, this transformation is challenging, but not impossible. We have many technologies available today that, with wider deployment, can lower carbon and other harmful pollutants in the near term. Some sectors will present greater challenges and will require new technologies and significant investment to reach net zero. We want to reward innovation and the businesses that invest in clean technologies.

However, we cannot only focus on businesses and technologies and hope that individual workers and communities automatically benefit by their adoption. We know that doesn’t always happen and that economic transformations can leave people and communities behind.

Workers displaced from lucrative jobs in fossil-fuel dependent industries must be able to find equally profitable jobs in their communities and in new clean industries. And we must reinvest in communities that currently are more exposed to harmful pollution and climate change. We can use this opportunity to ensure that the economy works for everyone and supports a safe, healthy environment.

The United States is a leader in innovation, but we cannot stay competitive with outdated technology and infrastructure. We must get ahead in the race to a clean economy. We need to grow new, clean industries here and employ our workers to deliver modern, high quality products to the world. We have the talent and the resources. All we need now is the determination to act.

As we begin this process, I invite everyone to share their ideas with us about how to modernize our infrastructure and transform our economy to reduce carbon pollution, create family-sustaining jobs, and lead the world in growing new, clean industries. I look forward to working with all of you as our effort to develop legislation to achieve 100-by-50 moves forward.