

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Securing America’s Future: Supply Chain Solutions for a Clean Energy Economy.”

November 16, 2021

I thank Chairmen Tonko and Rush for convening this important joint subcommittee hearing this morning on supply chain solutions for a clean energy economy.

This Committee and the Biden Administration are committed to the clean energy transition and to ambitious decarbonization goals, including a goal of generating 100 percent clean electricity by 2035.

The clean energy transition is underway across the world. Last year, annual renewable capacity additions increased by 45 percent worldwide, and that was despite the pressures and challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Domestically, the Energy Information Administration projects the share of renewables in the electricity generation mix to double by 2050.

This is a huge industry that’s only getting bigger. Unfortunately, we are not fully prepared right now to meet this growing demand, and I am concerned that we risk falling behind other countries as they invest in the industries of the future.

As an example, today China dominates the production and the assembly of solar photovoltaic modules. China controls over 70 percent of solar PV module assembly while, over the last year, the United States produced only three percent of the modules sold globally. China also has over 75 percent of global cell fabrication capacity, a crucial stage in the battery manufacturing process. In the meantime, the United States has less than 10 percent of the market share for capacity across major battery components and cell fabrication.

With skyrocketing projections for electric vehicle adoption and the growing necessity of energy storage solutions, this is an industry guaranteed to boom. As we look ahead, the question is whether we want the United States to lead or follow in the clean energy transition.

I strongly believe that we must lead that transition, so we no longer have to rely on other countries’ clean energy supply chains. It is becoming increasingly clear that key components needed for clean energy technologies are sourced from countries with unacceptable labor and environmental practices.

Fortunately, the Biden Administration has taken decisive action to halt the import of some goods sourced from countries that violate fundamental human rights. But we can and must do more.

It is also important to remember that the fossil fuel industry faces some of these same problems. Extraction processes and labor concerns have plagued the traditional energy supply chain for decades. We must build a clean energy economy that tackles the climate crisis by eliminating the historic polluting and poor labor practices of the international fossil fuel industry.

This is one of the many reasons it is critical that Congress pass the Build Back Better Act which invests heavily in our clean energy future. It includes investments in the development of innovative technologies and American manufacturing of zero emission transportation technologies. This important funding will increase demand for clean energy domestically, while also supporting the development of clean energy supply chains right here in the United States.

As we develop these supply chains, it's vital we focus not only on the manufacturing of products and technologies, but also on what happens to these goods at the end of their useful lifetime. In the coming decades, as batteries, wind turbines, and solar panels reach the end of their lives, we must manage their disposal and recycling in a way that is safe and economically beneficial. Creating circular supply chains that enable collection and reuse of these technologies at the end of their useful lifetimes will not only reduce waste, but also reduce costs and the amount of material needed for the clean energy transition.

For our nation's future it is crucial that we support this industry. A strong domestic clean energy industry will ensure we are able to meet our own clean energy goals and provide millions of jobs for Americans. It will also ensure that, as the world transitions to clean energy, the United States is not left behind. We must work to build these industries here. We must be competitive, and we must not miss this enormous opportunity for our nation's economy and the global climate.

I too would like to thank Jacqueline Cohen for her tremendous contributions to this Committee over the last 12 years. As Chairman Tonko mentioned, she played an instrumental role in the passage of the landmark Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act – which modernized the Toxic Substances Control Act for the first time in 40 years.

Over the last 12 years, her fingerprints are certainly found on any bill that became law out of our Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee. She has a particular passion for ensuring that all Americans have access to safe drinking water and for protecting and strengthening the Safe Drinking Water Act. She is going to be missed and I wish her the best in her future endeavors.