

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2023 EPA Budget”

May 17, 2022

I want to welcome EPA Administrator Regan back to the Committee. Since your last appearance, you have worked to restore EPA and put the agency on a better path toward combating climate change and protecting public health. I’m pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss how we can build on this progress and continue to deliver for the American people.

Last year, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that provided much-needed resources to EPA to uplift communities across the country. We have an opportunity to use this law to rebuild our communities and economy stronger than before, while providing the environmental leadership needed to usher a healthier and more sustainable future for every American.

While EPA’s efforts are certainly heading in the right direction, there is much more work ahead of us. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was just a down payment on our clean and climate-safe future, which is why the EPA’s budget request builds on that down payment to address the challenges ahead.

Time and again, we see evidence that a strong economy and strong environment and public health protections go hand in hand. This budget reflects that evidence to provide critical investments in the health, safety, and prosperity of our families and our environment.

For example, the budget includes \$1.1 billion for EPA to improve our nation’s air quality. It does this by developing and enforcing critical safeguards, as well as by funding grants to states and Tribes and scientifically-sound research.

The Administration’s budget also prioritizes programs to urgently tackle climate change, like cutting methane pollution from oil and gas sources, and implementing the American Innovation and Manufacturing Act. This bipartisan law – co-authored by Chairman Tonko and Representative Peters – will reduce the production and use of potent hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in our atmosphere.

The budget request also complements the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s reinstatement of the Superfund chemical tax to fund more cleanup actions – an effort I’ve personally championed to ensure that polluters pay to clean up their contamination in our communities. About 22 percent of Americans live within three miles of a Superfund site. Cleaning up and revitalizing contaminated properties creates jobs, mitigates threats to

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human health, and directly benefits the communities around contaminated sites, which are often low-income communities and communities of color.

The budget works to ensure that no community is left behind by investing \$1.45 billion in programs that will advance racial equity and secure environmental justice for historically overburdened and underserved communities. I'm particularly pleased that EPA is creating a new Environmental Justice National Program Manager position to help deliver on its promises to disproportionately impacted communities who have struggled with legacy pollution for far too long.

Clearly, we are expecting EPA to tackle an enormous amount of critical work right now to protect our communities and our families. The agency is taking the lead in replacing the nation's lead service drinking water lines. It is managing the risk from dangerous chemicals under the Toxic Substances Control Act program. And it is revitalizing other contaminated sites through the Brownfields program. EPA has a lot on its plate right now, and that's good, but it faces a serious challenge when it comes to staffing and resource shortages.

That's why I support the budget's request for more resources to bolster EPA's capacity, develop a pipeline of qualified staff, strengthen and support scientific integrity, and ensure EPA can meet the statutory obligations we set for it. The dedicated EPA workforce have worked tirelessly to fulfill the agency's core mission without adequate staffing or resources. The increase in resources proposed in this budget will not only help EPA fulfill its core mission, but also to process permits more efficiently and provide needed certainty to regulated industries.

I look forward to today's discussion to examine EPA's budget priorities. We are ready to work with you to ensure that everyone in every community – regardless of zip code – realizes their right to clean air, clean water, and clean land.