



House Energy and Commerce Committee Hearing

Testimony for Derrick Hollie, President Reaching America

April 15, 2021

Greetings Chairman Pallone,

Ranking Member Mc Morris Rogers and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity and allowing me to speak today.

I'm Derrick Hollie president of Reaching America, an education and policy organization I developed to address complex social issues impacting African American communities. One of the issues, I do the most work on is reducing energy poverty. Energy Poverty exists when low-income families or individuals spend up to thirty percent of their total income on their electric bill. I believe it would be fair to say many Americans who struggled with rising energy cost before COVID 19 pandemic are struggling even more now. And with millions still out of work, many are experiencing energy poverty for the first time – and with moratoriums over – some folks power is being turned off, in these same vulnerable communities that these new laws and regulations claim to protect.

We know that communities around the country, particularly low-income, minority, rural, and senior citizen communities, suffer from a lack of access to reliable energy sources and spend proportionately much higher amounts of their income on electricity costs and when this happens the result is energy poverty.

Eliminating energy poverty is a goal we all are interested in achieving. But in working towards that goal, we need to be mindful of how policies will impact the communities we are trying to serve.

When the government creates policy, its first priority should be the welfare of the people, especially those impacted the hardest. And with the uncertainty – still with this virus, it would not be prudent to eliminate safe reliable energy sources like oil and natural gas for unproven and unreliable renewable sources – certainly not right now.

Under the current Administration, the oil and gas industry is under attack -- from pipelines to hydraulic fracturing, which has revolutionized how we access our natural resources. A study done by Shale Crescent USA -- shows end users have saved \$1.1 trillion -- over the past 10 years due to increased

natural gas production that has reduced the price of natural gas in the United States. Meanwhile California, rich with its own natural resources, [increased its crude oil imports](#) from foreign countries from 5% in 1992 to 57% in 2018. This is a glaring example of hypocrisy, and here's why. Just two years ago, booming shale production helped the U.S. overtake Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the [world's top oil exporter](#) for the first time ever -- . How can our natural resources be worthy enough to supply other countries, but not good enough for us here at home?

My grandfather was a black coal miner in southwest Virginia, and I had the opportunity to visit that area and the poverty that exist in rural America is different and these communities have never recovered from the mines that were shut down decades ago. My fear -- Mr. Chairman is the same will happen to these thriving communities, that have relied on good paying oil and gas jobs for generations. I know plenty of black folks in Houston, Dallas and Louisiana who work in the industry, and they are not in agreement with new policies and regulations that will ultimately destroy their lifestyle.

I'm a licensed captain and have fished the Atlantic and the Gulf, and as an environmental steward, I recognize -- we have to protect our planet, however the bottom line here -- The federal clean energy standard being proposed is overly ambitious. And It will undoubtedly raise electricity rates for low-income, minority rural and senior citizen communities. It will also put fossil fuels, including natural gas, which has been a game changer, at a disadvantage; There are also provisions in the bill concerning eminent domain that will stop pipeline permitting. We have more miles of pipelines in this country than we have roads, and most people are living and breathing just fine.

I think we all would agree, the American people have gone through enough and with the uncertainty that still exists from the global pandemic of COVID 19, the last thing we need to do is take away good paying jobs, disrupt people's lifestyle more than it already has -- and destroy an industry that we have relied on for centuries. The same industry that has allowed us to create a life that Americans have grown to appreciate from petrochemicals, including plastics, fibers, pharmaceuticals and your yoga mat.

We need market-oriented energy policy that will allow America to keep exploring and developing our own natural resources safely and allow us to maintain our energy independence which will ultimately impact our national security -- why do we need to get our energy elsewhere we have more than enough right here at home.