

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Full Committee Hearing “The Devastating Health Impacts of Climate Change” August 5, 2020

Good morning.

Today’s hearing is about the climate crisis that our nation faces.

It is a crisis that is already harming the health of Americans. It is a crisis that our children will inherit. And if our government does not act now, it will result in tragedy on a vast scale.

But the good news is that there is still time to act. And the experts here today will explain how our nation, our economy, and the health of the American people all stand to benefit from decisive action limiting climate change.

I’ve called this hearing today—even though there are many important things we are working on this week—because handling one crisis does not negate our responsibility to face another.

We owe it to our constituents, to each other, and to future generations to take action on climate change now.

I am eager for this Committee to hear from our panelists today.

We will be learning about groundbreaking new research—some shared with the world at this hearing for the very first time. This research highlights the very real impacts of climate change and air pollution on American lives over the next century.

We will have the opportunity to learn from physicians who care for patients suffering from respiratory illness and exposure to extreme heat.

These witnesses are before us today ringing the alarm bell. And the House Oversight Committee is listening.

Unfortunately—as with the coronavirus pandemic—the President’s actions have actually made the problem of climate change worse.

President Trump has directed his administration to dismantle efforts to save our planet. He has rolled back clean air and clean water protections.

He withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement—a global commitment to keep warming under 2 degrees Celsius.

When announcing the withdrawal, President Trump stated, and I quote, **“As President, I can put no other consideration before the wellbeing of American citizens.”**

Yet, the President’s actions put the health of Americans at further risk. Lives are lost due to climate change. And because of increased disease, these actions also increased the cost of healthcare.

By contrast, Democrats in Congress have relentlessly pushed for reforms.

For example, last year, in February 2019, I—along with numerous colleagues here on the Oversight Committee—cosponsored H.R. 109, legislation recognizing the federal government’s duty to create a Green New Deal to end our country’s reliance on fossil fuels.

Our Committee is also actively working on legislation to reduce the federal government’s environmental footprint.

This work includes a bill to require the Postal Service to transition to a one-hundred percent emissions-free vehicle fleet by 2040.

This will ensure that the Postal Service has the tools necessary for its mission while making our air cleaner.

I am deeply committed to making this a reality, and to pursuing additional legislation within the jurisdiction of our Committee to combat climate change. Congress has a duty to lead in this crisis.

I am honored to be chairing this hearing today. I am honored to be listening to this distinguished panel of scientists, researchers, and doctors. And I am glad my Republican colleagues are participating, as this is a challenge we face together.

Thank you all for being here.

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