

Rep. Debbie Mucarsel Powell

Testimony before the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

November 14, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Castor. And thank you again so much for taking the time last week to visit my beautiful district in South Florida. As we discussed and saw first-hand, South Florida – and more specifically – the Florida Keys, is ground zero for climate change.

We are seeing dramatic sea level rise. We are seeing stronger storms. And our coral reefs – the rainforests of the ocean – are dying.

I'd like to bring your attention to this picture. Parts of Key Largo and many areas of South Florida experienced more than 40 days of flooding. King tides, as these are called, are normal to a certain point, because they are the result of the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon, as well as low pressure systems and strong winds. But this year, the flooding is higher and longer than we can remember. And with sea level rise and changing weather patterns, it will only get worse.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue, and it's not something that we have to deal with in the far-off future. It is already changing our way of life. It is already putting our property in the path of destruction. It is already affecting our fishing industry, our tourism industry, and our economy as a whole.

While some have chosen to put their heads in the sand on this issue, South Florida is stepping up to the challenge.

Florida International University in my district is filled with forward-thinking, creative, and innovative minds that are working day in and day out, coming up with ways to not only *fight* climate change, but also *adapt* to the consequences that climate change will inevitably bring. Researchers there are working to advance green infrastructure initiatives, like protecting coral reefs and sea grass beds, which dissipate wave action, restoring coastal wetlands, which clean our fresh water, and restoring our mangroves, which absorb vast amounts of CO₂, protect against storm surges, and weaken strong winds.

In Congress, we must support innovative efforts, like researchers' work at FIU's Institute of Environment to 3-D print mangroves using eco-cement. These can then be planted along our coasts to help restore natural mangrove stands and act as a foundation for new habitats.

Innovation like this is the answer. The Committee must take full advantage of the talent we have in our own backyard.