

**Testimony – Rep. Lauren Underwood**

House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
Full Committee Member Day Hearing

*November 14, 2019  
1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. 1300 Longworth*

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Thank you, Madam Chair, for providing this opportunity for Members to share their priorities with the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

The very existence of this Committee is a testament to the urgency of this crisis and the House’s commitment to tackling it head on.

I am grateful to come before the Committee today to bring attention to the important need for Congressional action to address climate change.

The science is clear: we are on an alarming path. Our climate is changing, presenting an existential threat to our environment, our national security, our health, and our economy.

As the country looks to its leaders to take federal action to address climate change, I am proud to have supported H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act, which is the first major climate legislation passed by the House in nearly a decade.

I was honored to continue this effort when I introduced H.R. 3819, the Climate and Health Protection Act, with my colleague and former Secretary for Health and Human Services, Representative Donna Shalala (D-FL).

As a public health nurse, I fully recognize the adverse impact climate change will have on public health, particularly for the most vulnerable people in our society – pregnant women, children, the elderly, and countless others.

My bill protects the Centers for Disease Control’s Climate and Health Program. This program is the only office within the Department of Health and Human Services dedicated to helping state and local governments prepare for the public health consequences of climate change.

Secondly, my bill increases funding for the program to \$15 million which is consistent with the funding provided in the House’s Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations package.

Without the resources and services provided by the Climate and Health Program, many communities across the country will be left vulnerable and unaware of the devastating health consequences climate change poses.

I appreciate the Committee on Energy and Commerce’s oversight work on this Administration’s decision to limit the Climate and Health Program. In addition to continuing that work, we must pass my Climate and Health Protection Act to reinstate and protect this vital program.

It is an honor to represent the people of the 14<sup>th</sup> District of Illinois, who know that it is long past time to take serious steps to address climate change--or we risk living with life-altering consequences to our health, economy, and national security.

I've spoken with farmers in my district who have experienced firsthand the impacts of climate change and are concerned about what it means for our agriculture community.

This past spring, Illinois saw historic flooding and other extreme weather events brought on by climate change. With Illinois rivers swelling beyond the flood stage and past record peaks, farmers were not able to plant their crops until well into the spring months.

After hearing the concerns of farmers in the 14<sup>th</sup> District, I felt compelled to protect USDA research data by introducing an amendment to the FY 2020 Agriculture appropriations package that would prevent federal agencies like USDA from removing existing public information about climate change.

Sadly, just weeks after my amendment was passed by the House, new reports exposed the extent of the anti-climate science sentiment at USDA. These reports indicated that USDA leadership took steps to hide scientific findings on the consequences of climate change and the impacts it will have on farmers.

Undermining public disclosure of climate change research sets a dangerous precedent, which can endanger our national security, food security, and the livelihoods of Illinois farmers and farmers throughout the country.

As you can see, climate change is a front of mind issue in my district. And like many others across the country, they are demanding real leadership on this issue from us – their elected representatives.

I came to Congress with a mandate from my constituents, and I am committed to ensuring Congress upholds its responsibility to communities like mine who are demanding meaningful, long-term solutions to climate change.

We also need to talk about a broad-based approach to climate change. I am excited about forthcoming legislation that would put the United States on the path to have a 100% clean economy by 2050.

I look forward to working with you, Chairwoman Castor, and with other members of this Committee to advance meaningful legislation during this Congress.