



**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Building Climate Resilient Communities”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
June 11, 2021**

*As prepared for delivery*

As Congress continues to work on much-needed infrastructure and jobs legislation, the climate crisis keeps proving we need generational investments that will create a stronger, more resilient America. As we speak, the West is facing a record-setting mega-drought, increasing the risks of dangerous heatwaves and wildfires, and shrinking water supplies for millions of Americans.

Severe storms, persistent droughts, massive flooding, and other climate-related disasters cost our nation nearly 100 billion dollars in 2020. Just this year, Americans have also experienced a deadly and destructive winter storm in Texas, and historic floods in the Southeast. We have no time for half measures. The time to invest in resilience is now.

The building blocks of a stronger, resilient America are resilient communities and partnerships between federal, regional, state, county, local and tribal governments. It’s up to Congress to build those strong partnerships with smart investments and a shared vision for a net zero future. That’s what we will focus on today. We are joined by an exceptional group of leaders from America’s cities and regions to help us chart that path.

We don’t all experience the climate crisis in the same way. We know climate risks make social, racial, and economic inequities worse. Communities of color and working class Americans are at the greatest risk when it comes to disasters, and they often have the least capacity to adapt. Just this week, the *New York Times* highlighted how FEMA’s disaster relief efforts often help white Americans and white communities more than communities of color, even when the amount of damage in neighborhoods is similar. That’s why climate action must also create opportunities and strive for environmental justice that will protect every American, regardless of their zip code or their skin color.

America’s mayors understand these challenges. In Madison, Wisconsin, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway is showing us how to invest in clean energy while also creating prosperity in underserved communities. Through her GreenPower initiative, the mayor has helped train and hire diverse workers to install over a megawatt of solar energy on municipal facilities. We’ve seen important progress in Los Angeles too, where Mayor Eric Garcetti launched a strategic plan to increase community resilience and an initiative to bring the city’s infrastructure into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Atlanta, the nation’s 10th largest economy, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms has pioneered innovative resilience-financing tools and committed to 100% clean energy by 2035, all while working to address social equity and climate adaptation. And in the upper Mississippi

River basin, represented today by Kirsten Wallace, states are already working with federal partners to respond to the changes in rainfall and flooding.

These are just a few of the many success stories across America. Now it's up to Congress to enact ambitious, transformational legislation to help cities large and small protect themselves, their citizens and their budgets. Unless Congress acts, Americans will be faced with unsafe roads, increasingly flooded neighborhoods, and worsening power outages. These costs and risks are here and growing. That's why we're working to pass the American Jobs Plan, which will make vital investments in resilience as we work towards fulfilling President Biden's vision of solving the climate crisis. The American Jobs Plan gives us a historic opportunity to modernize our infrastructure and our electric grid, so that we're better prepared when climate disasters strike. And it gives us a chance to put people to work in good-paying jobs, expanding opportunity and prosperity across the board, and reducing the carbon pollution that continues to warm our planet.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, as they tell us what they need to continue to build climate resilient communities. Thank you all for being here, and I look forward to our conversation.