

Chairman Brett Guthrie’s Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Hearing
“Corrosion, Collapse, and Clean-Up: Examining the
Potomac Interceptor Collapse”
May 20, 2026

Good morning, and thank you, Chairman Joyce, for convening this important hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for appearing today as we examine the Potomac Interceptor collapse and its consequences for public health, environmental safety, and infrastructure reliability.

The collapse of this critical wastewater system was not a minor incident. It resulted in the release of more than 240 million gallons—the equivalent of roughly 360 Olympic-sized swimming pools—of untreated sewage onto surrounding land and into the Potomac River, which is a vital resource for the National Capital Region. This event raised serious public health concerns, disrupted ecosystems, and highlighted vulnerabilities in aging infrastructure that serves millions of Americans.

While emergency actions eventually contained the overflow of wastewater and repaired the pipe, and remediation efforts are still underway, significant questions remain about

what was known about the condition of the pipe leading up to the collapse; what was being done to address known vulnerabilities to the pipe; and whether there are other similar or even more urgent vulnerabilities in other sections of the 54-mile pipe. A key question today is whether there are lessons learned that can be applied moving forward to prevent something like this from happening again in the future.

Incidents like this erode public trust. Just as fraud undermines confidence in federal health programs, failures in critical infrastructure undermine confidence in the systems Americans rely on every day. When infrastructure fails at this scale, the consequences extend far beyond the immediate area—they can impact public safety, environmental resilience, and economic activity.

Today's hearing is about oversight, accountability, and ensuring good stewardship of essential systems that the public relies on. Doing so ensures that infrastructure systems are properly maintained and risks are addressed proactively.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and working toward solutions that strengthen oversight and protect our communities. With that, I yield back.