

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
of  
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security  
Ranking Member Diana DeGette**

***Hearing on “Powered Up: State Utility Regulators On Challenges To Reliable, Affordable Electricity”***

**February 14, 2024**

Thank you, Chairman Duncan. Witnesses, thank you for joining us today and for the work that you are doing. The public utility commissions (PUCs) that you all are a part of play a critical role across the nation. Your work every day is responsible for making sure that electricity is available, and you help regulate the electric utilities that deliver reliable electricity to American homes and businesses. Moving forward, one of the biggest factors impacting that reliability will be the climate crisis and our grid’s resilience in the face of that reality. And we need to be clear about the stakes. The climate crisis is an existential one. Extreme weather is already hitting states across the nation in the form of strong storms, longer wildfire seasons, massive flooding, colder temperatures throughout the winter. The list goes on. And the data is clear. We must act.

A key component of our response to the climate crisis will be the transition to cleaner energy sources. The policies you help enact are vital for setting the pace of clean energy deployment. And your decisions to encourage or block particular sources of electricity have a direct impact on the day-to-day life of Americans in the short term and on all of our futures in the long term. Knowing the harm unregulated pollution from energy production has caused in so many communities, and the way that it fuels the climate crisis, has inspired Democrats to consistently prioritize the transition to cleaner energy – without sacrificing the reliability the American people deserve. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, enacted in 2021, has accelerated the deployment of utility-scale renewable energy and energy storage. It also provided a historic \$10.5 billion for grid reliability, resiliency, and flexibility projects.

The Biden Administration has implemented commonsense carbon pollution standards for fossil fuel power plants. This action will reduce dangerous air pollution, fight the climate crisis and protect Americans’ health in communities across the country. Meanwhile, the Department of Energy announced \$3.5 billion for funding projects like power line hardening, battery microgrids, and wildfire resilience. I expect some of my colleagues in this hearing to use their time to try to insinuate that transitioning to cleaner energy will mean less reliable electricity. Here’s the reality: Our current fossil fuel infrastructure has already proven itself incapable of withstanding extreme weather events. But my home state of Colorado is proving that transitioning to cleaner forms of electricity doesn’t have to mean any compromise on reliability.

Colorado has been moving quickly in the direction of renewable energy, supplying just under 40% of our electricity in 2022. In 2010, 68% of our electricity came from coal. In 2022, coal supplied just 36% of Colorado’s electricity with gas providing 26%. In Colorado, one of the utilities has received approval from the public utilities commission to build a new transmission network that will connect wind

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and solar resources. This new wind and solar power in Colorado will help the State achieve a carbon-free grid by 2040. The Colorado Electric Transmission Authority (CETA) is studying the potential need for additional transmission in Colorado, which may include electric storage to harness all of the new energy wind and solar will create – thereby increasing resilience and reliability. So as Colorado is transitioning to more reliable, cleaner energy sources, it is also investing in measures that will increase resilience. I'll close with this: You all bear massive responsibility. A lot is asked of you and a lot is expected of you. I look forward to hearing from each of you today. Because I'm confident – given the continuation of federal investments, given the realities of the changing climate, and given the needs of the American people – that we can work together to ensure a smooth transition to cleaner energy that doesn't sacrifice reliability.

I yield back.