

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “EPA’s Brownfields Program”**

April 21, 2016

I want to thank the Chairman for calling this hearing on EPA’s Brownfields program. I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here, particularly Mayor Chris Bollwage (“*Bowl wage*”) from my home state of New Jersey, who testified before this committee back in 2001 in support of our bipartisan effort to enact legislation to address brownfields sites.

When we passed the original Brownfields bill in the 107th Congress, I was the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee and the lead Democrat on the legislation, which was one of the only pieces of environmental legislation that I can remember President George W. Bush ever signing into law. I worked in a bipartisan manner then with my Republican Chairman, the late Paul Gillmor of Ohio, and I would like to continue this bipartisan effort as we work to improve on the program and ensure that states and local communities have the

resources they need to revitalize their communities. I hope that my colleagues on the Committee will join me in working to improve this important program.

The Brownfields program has been an incredibly important tool for protecting public health and spurring economic growth in New Jersey and throughout the country. Brownfields properties are a blight on the community. Though these sites do not warrant listing on the National Priority List (NPL) like Superfund sites, these contaminated properties can have negative environmental and economic impacts.

The success of this program cannot be understated. Removing public health hazards by cleaning up contaminated sites is incredibly important for the surrounding communities. Since the program's inception, thousands of contaminated sites have been remediated, allowing communities to create new developments— like housing and parks. EPA has found that cleaning up underutilized or abandoned brownfields properties reduces health risks, decreases pollution and reduces storm water runoff. Aside from the

environmental benefits, revitalizing these properties can result in crime reduction, job creation, and boosts in the local economy.

However, as successful as the Brownfields program has been, there is still so much important cleanup work to be done. I expect we will hear from today's witnesses about the staggering number of brownfields properties in need of remediation and the increased complexity of remaining sites.

Many stakeholders have indicated a need for increased funding and flexibility to allow states and local communities to use their resources effectively to address the increased complexity of these cleanups. Through multi-purpose grants, regional planning, and increased caps for individual grants, communities can start to tackle this problem.

Communities also need assistance with capacity building. Through job training, technical assistance, and education and outreach, communities can leverage federal and state assistance, engage with developers in the remediation process, and take ownership of their community's revitalization.

We should be equipping communities with the tools they need to ensure successful cleanups.

Despite the growing need for resources and broad support on both sides of the aisle, this successful program has never been reauthorized. And while the program has continued to receive appropriations, unfortunately, funding levels have declined. Furthermore, the federal tax incentives have lapsed. These were incredibly useful tools that encouraged developers to remediate sites by allowing them to deduct the costs of cleanups. We cannot continue to expect the same success from a program that is underfunded and lacking the necessary tools to be effective. As we work to determine how we can strengthen this program, we should ensure that funding is part of the conversation. We should all support cleanup efforts, and should ensure that these efforts are adequately funded.

So, I appreciate today's opportunity to learn more about how we can increase the effectiveness of this program. As many of you know, I have previously introduced legislation to reauthorize appropriations and create the

needed flexibility for the Brownfields program. My legislation aimed to address some of the concerns that have been expressed by stakeholders, including increased capacity building, more flexibility in the use of grants, and increased caps on individual grants.

I would like to reintroduce an updated version of that bill soon and hope that we can work together to get bipartisan Brownfields legislation signed into law this year.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.