



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
**DEMOCRATS**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Pallone Supports Increased Funding for Brownfields Program**

*“This is not just a program that provides environmental and health benefits – it is a job creator that primes the pump for local investment and development.”*

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) highlighted the long-term benefits of reauthorizing and providing meaningful funding for the Brownfields program today at a Subcommittee on Environment hearing titled, “Discussion Draft: Brownfields Reauthorization.”*

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing on draft legislation to reauthorize EPA’s important Brownfields program. This discussion draft reflects input from the Democratic staff, and I thank the Chairman for working with us. I hope that we can craft a strong bill that can become law. [The Brownfields program has always been bipartisan, and it should continue to enjoy bipartisan support.]

At the outset, I would like to express my frustration that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was unable to provide a witness for this hearing. It is particularly important to have the views of the Administration represented at hearings where we are reviewing legislation. There is important work to be done, so I hope that the Trump Administration can finally get around to nominating people for senior leadership positions at EPA.

I also want to note at the start that there are serious concerns hanging over this hearing because of recent reports that the Trump Administration wants to defund or significantly cut the Brownfields program. Brownfields funding is so important for communities across the nation, and the return on investment is substantial. Congress will have the final say on funding levels for this program and I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in calling for robust brownfields funding.

Turning to this hearing, it is great to see Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage from my home state of New Jersey here today. Mayor Bollwage has advocated for the Brownfields program before Congress many times, dating back to when we passed the original Brownfields bill in 2002. I was the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee then and I worked with the Republican Chairman of the Subcommittee, the late Paul Gillmor of Ohio to create the

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Brownfields program. It is fitting that Mayor Bollwage is back today as we take the first formal step toward reauthorizing the 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. With financial help from the federal government, communities can clean up contaminated sites and prepare them for development for parks, commerce, housing, or a number of other uses that can benefit a local community. Though these contaminated sites do not warrant listing on the National Priorities List like Superfund sites, they still have negative environmental and economic impacts.

By almost any metric, the Brownfields program has been a remarkable success. Since the program's inception, more than 25,000 contaminated sites have been remediated, allowing communities to create new developments. EPA has found that cleaning up underutilized or abandoned brownfields properties reduces health risks, decreases pollution and reduces storm water runoff.

But this is not just a program that provides environmental and health benefits – it is a job creator that primes the pump for local investment and development. All told, the Brownfields program has leveraged over \$22 billion in investment around these sites, which is a stunning return on the federal government's modest investment in the program. Simply put, it provides tremendous value to the federal government and a boost to the economy of local communities.

Brownfields has been a major success, but there is still so much important cleanup work that needs to be done. When this Subcommittee held a hearing on the Brownfields program last year, we heard from witnesses about the staggering number of brownfields properties in need of remediation and the increased complexity of the remaining sites. Stakeholders also indicated a need for increased funding and flexibility to allow states and local communities to use their resources effectively to address the new challenges presented by these cleanups.

The legislation we are considering today is a good start toward achieving the goal of making the Brownfields program work better for communities across the country. It sets up more flexible multi-purpose grants, increases caps for individual grants, and extends program eligibility to nonprofit organizations.

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.

I have introduced legislation, the Brownfields Authorization Increase Act, which would make many of the same changes reflected in today's discussion draft but would also increase authorization levels for the program. 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.

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Today's hearing represents encouraging progress on finally reauthorizing the Brownfields program. If infrastructure is indeed a priority of this administration, they should look no further than the Brownfields program as a way to create jobs and spur local investment, all while cleaning up contamination in our local communities.

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

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