

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
of**

**Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Ranking Member  
Paul D. Tonko**

***Hearing on “Revitalizing America Through the Reauthorization of the Brownfields Program”***

**September 27, 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chair for holding this hearing on the majority’s discussion draft to reauthorize EPA’s Brownfields program. Whenever we discuss this program, I immediately think about the opportunities that have been created in my district and my hometown from the remediation of former industrial sites. Along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, many mill towns once thrived. Factories produced carpets, collars, and leather products. But when those factories closed, valuable properties— often on the waterfront— were left abandoned or underutilized.

Thanks to the hard work of local governments, often with the support of EPA funding, many of those properties have been able to be transformed. In some places, new parks, allowing public access to the waterfront, have been created. In others, sites have been prepared for economic redevelopment, enabling a new employer to move into the space. This is a common good news story, and it is not unique to my district. Brownfields are found in communities all across the country, from the most industrial cities to the most rural of towns. And these success stories would not be possible without the EPA. Because of EPA’s support, since 2002, tens of thousands of acres of idle land have been made ready for productive use, increasing nearby property values and helping to preserve greenfields.

These properties have been brought back onto the tax rolls and helped support communities’ revitalization efforts. And they have protected public health by addressing potential environmental threats. I am so proud of the bipartisan work this Subcommittee did during the last reauthorization to strengthen the program. That effort made a number of widely agreed upon improvements based on the consensus recommendations from a range of stakeholders. This included increasing individual grants to enable more complex sites to be remediated, creating multipurpose grants, making it possible for non-profit stakeholders to get more involved in the program, and allowing a small portion of grants to be used to cover administrative costs.

With these reforms, the program has continued its strong track record of success. Each federal dollar spent continues to leverage about \$20. And just yesterday, EPA announced the availability of \$235 million in Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup grants, made possible by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included a historic investment of \$1.5 billion for the program. And these funds provide even greater opportunities for disadvantaged communities by removing the program’s cost share requirements.

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I have no doubt that this round of funding will bring new opportunities and hope to many communities. I am very excited by the work of the program since the last reauthorization. I believe the changes that were made have been successful, and I am eager to examine how we can build upon that success. But with that said, there are a few provisions in the discussion draft under consideration today that I am not convinced have the same level of consensus and widespread support as the reforms from 2018. I also want to note that the authorization funding levels have been left blank. I expect one area where we will hear agreement from all the stakeholders today is that this very successful program can and should receive more funding.

We know the Brownfields program is an incredible investment of federal dollars. It enables local governments to support environmental and economic revitalization by turning a liability into an opportunity. So, I truly hope we can work together to make sure this program has the resources and authorities necessary to continue assessing and remediating the tremendous number of remaining sites across the country. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, and I hope we can work together on this legislation.

Thank you. I yield back.