

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Ranking Member
Paul Tonko

Markup of One Bill

March 7, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Today the Subcommittee will consider the Air Quality Standards Implementation Act of 2024, which would radically reform and, in my opinion, undermine the Clean Air Act. For more than half a century, the Clean Air Act has provided EPA with the authority necessary to drastically reduce soot, smog, and other dangerous air pollution.

This has been done using a process that sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety, using the latest science, and without consideration of cost. This process has been wildly successful. Criteria air pollutants have been reduced significantly while our economy has grown.

Despite this undeniable success, the proposal before us today would completely upend this proven standard setting process. So, it should not surprise anyone that several dozens of environmental, public health, and medical organizations have opposed this legislation.

They rightly recognize that despite our national progress reducing pollution, millions of Americans still breathe unhealthy air. And I cannot see how this proposal would enable the air quality improvements necessary to protect every American. As we discussed at the legislative hearing, this proposal would drastically change the NAAQS process, doubling the time between reviews and injecting feasibility into the standard setting process, among other reforms.

Make no mistake, these changes will make it more difficult for EPA to protect Americans from air pollution. Rather than seeking to undermine the Clean Air Act, we should celebrate it. We should continue to be confident that Americans can have both clean air and a strong economy. And we should continue to expect that the Clean Air Act will drive innovation, supporting the development and deployment of pollution control technologies that would not have occurred absent strong, health-protective standards.

American children today are better protected from unhealthy levels of air pollution because more than 50 years ago Congress had the foresight to enact a law that requires standards to be regularly updated based on our latest and improved understanding of how pollution affects human health.

We should strive for that foresight today; setting the conditions to allow future generations of Americans to benefit from healthier air and a stronger economy, as our

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predecessors have done for us. We know it can be done, and we know this proposal risks taking us backwards.

I look forward to today's discussion, and I yield back.