

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

***Hearing on “A Decade Later: Assessing the Legacy and Impact of the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act”***

**January 22, 2025**

Today, we will examine the legacy of the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act. The law received strong bipartisan support back in 2016 and was named after New Jersey's late Senator Lautenberg of New Jersey – a longtime friend of mine and a lifetime environmental champion. The law updated and modernized the Toxic Substances Control Act, otherwise known as TSCA, for the first time in 40 years.

Since its passage, I have worked to ensure it lives up to its namesake's commitment to protect Americans from dangerous chemicals, particularly children, pregnant women, workers, and environmental justice communities.

A key goal of the Lautenberg Act was to finally give the Environmental Protection Agency the ability to address the threats of harmful chemicals on the market. The original TSCA simply did not give EPA the tools it needed to address risks even though we had long known of the dangers of chemicals, like asbestos. After decades of a broken chemical safety law and years of negotiation, Congress enacted the Lautenberg Act.

Now, thanks to the updated law, EPA is required to make an affirmative determination that a chemical is safe, before it can enter commerce. This action will stem the flow of toxic chemicals into people's homes. EPA is also required to review and manage harmful chemicals already on the market – finally providing EPA the ability to ban dangerous chemicals that have harmed far too many.

Despite the overwhelming bipartisan support and clear direction from Congress, it quickly became clear that the first Trump EPA was not interested in implementing a strong federal chemical program. The Trump EPA's actions underestimated chemical risks, especially for workers and overburdened communities, delayed health-protective rules, and exerted undue political influence on the regulatory process.

Fortunately, over the last four years, the agency worked to get back on track. The Biden EPA recommitted to scientific integrity and its critical mission to protect public health and the environment. EPA conducted a second look at the flawed risk evaluations of the Trump Administration, implementing TSCA as intended, and addressing disproportionate risks for vulnerable populations. Under Biden's leadership, EPA was finally able to ban the use of known, dangerous chemicals like new uses of asbestos, methylene chloride and TCE. EPA is also well on its way to properly addressing legacy uses of asbestos.

The EPA's TSCA office has also played a critical role in addressing the rampant PFAS contamination across the nation. I was pleased to see EPA take actions to require more testing and reporting, eliminate exemptions, and restrict certain legacy PFAS.

Despite these significant improvements during the Biden Administration, the TSCA office still faces its fair share of challenges. The office has been underfunded despite the significant increase in work required under the Lautenberg Act, contributing to its struggles to meet deadlines. But without the appropriate staff and resources, we cannot expect EPA to fulfill its mission to protect health and safety and complete timely chemical reviews.

I am concerned that this hard-fought progress will be stifled under the new Administration, which did not have a great record four years ago and has already shown itself to be more interested in special corporate interests than the health of American families, workers, and communities.

We've seen how vulnerable communities bear the brunt of a weak chemical safety office. We've heard the tragic stories of Americans gone too soon because of lax – or nonexistent – chemical regulations. We cannot afford to go back.

If my Republican colleagues want to explore the possibility of a reauthorization of TSCA, we must work to strengthen it to ensure we protect the health of all Americans – especially our most vulnerable – while fostering innovation. As we examine the implementation of the Lautenberg Act today, it is important to me that this law live up to the environmental legacy Senator Lautenberg left behind.

I look forward to today's hearing. And I yield back..