

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

***Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2026 Environmental Protection Agency Budget”***

**May 20, 2025**

President Trump’s budget is a blueprint for disaster. Trump doesn’t believe in government, and his budget continues his relentless assault on the federal agencies whose mission it is to protect the health and well-being of the American people.

This budget would cut funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by 55 percent – the largest cut in EPA’s history. This proposed cut would seriously threaten public health and the environment. It also fails to deliver on many of the promises the Trump Administration has made on dangerous toxins like lead and PFAS and prioritizes polluters over public health and the environment. While we only have the skinny budget to review at this stage, it does not give me confidence that anything more comprehensive will tell a different story.

The budget calls categorical grants to states a “crutch,” flying in the face of the cooperative federalism that has made EPA so successful in cleaning up toxic pollution and providing healthier futures for Americans. EPA is deserting the states to deal with serious climate and pollution issues on their own, while EPA focuses on giving polluters free passes to poison our communities with reckless abandon.

The skinny budget outlines major cuts to historically bipartisan programs that provide a lifeline to communities across the nation. It cuts \$250 million from the Superfund program – undermining our ability to clean up toxic waste sites throughout the nation. It also seeks to decimate the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, which are the primary funding sources for water infrastructure projects. These state revolving funds are critical to ensuring communities have safe, reliable drinking water and wastewater services. This comes after EPA recently announced plans to rescind and delay the historic PFAS drinking water standard, raising serious questions about the Trump Administration’s commitment to safe, clean, and affordable water for all.

EPA is also walking away from its commitments by canceling competitively awarded grants where work is already underway in communities across the country with little or no explanation.

I remain outraged by Administrator Zeldin’s illegal freeze of obligated funds under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. This fund is meant to make energy more affordable, foster economic development, boost supply chains, and create good-paying jobs – all the things that this Administration says it supports. Yet, the Administrator has engaged in a smear campaign where he is spreading false and misleading statements about the program in an attempt to

undermine it and strip away these funds. I firmly believe the Administrator's actions are a violation of the law, and I am hopeful that these funds will be released soon so that our communities can benefit from these investments.

It is clear to me that under Administrator Zeldin's leadership, EPA is becoming an unreliable partner and illegally withholding congressionally directed funds.

I am also concerned about troubling activities that will endanger the health and safety of American families, children, and workers. The Trump Administration has made it clear that EPA cares more about polluters' bottom line than the communities and American children who will bear the brunt of these fool hearty decisions. What is potentially most egregious is the attempt to roll back EPA's landmark Endangerment Finding. It's absolutely shocking that anyone in the year 2025 could look around and honestly say that climate change is not already harming Americans.

I'm also troubled by EPA's recent reorganization plan. The effectiveness of the agency hinges on EPA having the career staff necessary to fulfill its mission. They are the backbone of the agency. Unfortunately, Administrator Zeldin's actions to indiscriminately fire hundreds of employees with plans to relieve thousands more show a blatant disregard for the critical work career staff conduct on behalf of the American people every day. He continues to disingenuously claim to be fighting government waste, while simultaneously eviscerating EPA's ability to appropriately manage programs and oversee issued grants.

Finally, Administrator Zeldin is thumbing his nose at Congress' ability to conduct important oversight of this Administration. Committee Democrats have sent several letters to the Administrator demanding answers about certain actions he's taken. We have received very few answers – some coming late yesterday. This is unacceptable. The Energy and Commerce Committee is your authorizer, and we are tasked with conducting oversight. As Administrator of EPA, you don't just owe Congress an explanation, but also the American people.

And with that I yield back the balance of my time.