

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “Short-Circuiting Progress: How the Clean Air Act Impacts Building Necessary Infrastructure and Onshoring American Innovation”

June 11, 2025

Today, we are examining two Republican draft bills that once again put corporate polluters over people and will make the American people sicker. With these discussion drafts, Republicans are altering the fundamental premise of the Clean Air Act and threatening our ability to ensure Americans have clean and healthy air to breathe.

For over 50 years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has had the authority and obligation to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards or NAAQS. These health-based standards essentially set the level of pollution that is “safe” to breathe. They are based solely on the latest science and medical evidence. Since 1970, these standards have been the foundation of the Clean Air Act – resulting in healthier air while our economy has grown.

We know air pollution poses serious and significant health risks to communities every day. Even short-term exposure can cause aggravated asthma attacks, acute bronchitis, and increased susceptibility to respiratory infections. Pollution is dangerous – plain and simple – and Americans have a right to clean, safe air.

That is why I was pleased that last year EPA strengthened the NAAQS for fine particulate matter, also known as PM 2.5. The new standard has tremendous public health benefits. It will save Americans up to \$46 billion in 2032 in health care costs alone. It will also prevent asthma attacks, lost workdays, and thousands of premature deaths. But Trump’s EPA is abandoning that effort.

My Republican colleagues now want to double down on the Administration’s actions by resurrecting bills that sell out the health of families and children to line the pockets of big corporate interests. As they work to steal health care from 16 million people, they are pushing proposals that will make people sick.

The discussion drafts before us today would allow industry profits to override science in setting air quality standards, provide amnesty to new polluting facilities at the expense of existing ones, and remove incentives to cut pollution. They would also weaken and delay the fundamental protections in the law, virtually guaranteeing that people living in areas with poor air quality will continue to breathe unhealthy air.

These pieces of legislation are not new. Over the last decade, Republicans have pushed these proposals through the Committee several times. They can try to claim these drafts will not

June 11, 2025

Page 2

increase air pollution, but any time you put polluters' bottom line over public health, the result is dirtier air and sicker people.

Our experience with the Clean Air Act tells us that we do not need to choose between the health of our communities and a healthy economy. We can, and must, have both.