

Committee on Energy and Commerce

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

Hearing on “Ready for Reuse: Legislative Proposals to Unleash the Potential of America's Brownfields Sites”

March 4, 2026

Today we are discussing proposals to reauthorize the Environmental Protection Agency’s Brownfields Program, which continues to be a shining example of how government can protect the public health of our communities while also stimulating economic growth.

Since I partnered with the late Republican Representative Paul Gillmor of Ohio over 20 years ago to write the Brownfields law, the program has consistently enjoyed bipartisan support. We have come together to reauthorize the program to revitalize communities around the nation – cleaning up environmental contamination, boosting public health, and bringing back economic growth and jobs. Every Congressional district is home to at least one of these sites.

Since its inception, more than 42,000 Brownfield sites have been revitalized and made ready for development around the nation. These projects leveraged nearly 230,000 jobs and more than \$44 billion in economic development. For every dollar the federal government invests in the Brownfields Program, we get roughly 20 dollars back in economic return, showcasing the win-win scenario that the program produces. I think we can all agree that this program is more than worth every dollar we put into it.

That is why my discussion draft, the Brownfields Reauthorization for an Affordable and Revitalized America Act, continues this record of success by increasing funding for the program and increasing grant amounts to tackle harder to reach projects. It also waives the cost share requirement for communities with the most need.

While the Republican discussion drafts before us have some promising ideas, overall, unfortunately, they move the Brownfields Program in the wrong direction and could unnecessarily imperil this bipartisan program.

Most notably they include a new definition for “nationally significant infrastructure” projects that is shortsighted. It would open the door for private industry – like data centers, fossil energy generation, and mining operations – to take public funds from the Brownfields Program and create backward incentives that prioritize polluting interests over local control.

Americans across the country are facing higher monthly energy bills, thanks to data centers, the cancelation of cheap renewable energy projects, and the Trump Administration forcing expensive fossil generation to stay online. Yet these Republican drafts propose to take away money from one of our most successful public programs to funnel it to the very same corporate interests.

In reauthorizing the Brownfields Program, we must ensure it serves those who need it most – state and local governments, nonprofits, and communities who should have final say in how their land is developed. Ultimately, they may choose to approve a new park, low-income housing, or a data center on

March 4, 2026

Page 2

remediated land, but Congress should not predetermine that outcome. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Republican drafts would have us do. I simply cannot support taking funds needed to clean up and revitalize local communities to give even more handouts to big corporations.

Thankfully, there are a few things where our draft bills are in agreement. We both included increased funding for the overall program and increased grant amounts for harder to reach projects, although my discussion draft includes more funding. We also both remove the cost share requirement for small and disadvantaged communities. These are the same priorities raised at previous Brownfields hearings before this Subcommittee.

So, my hope is that we can use these areas of agreement as the basis for a strong and unified Brownfields reauthorization bill that can pass this Committee and be signed into law before the end of the fiscal year. We must reauthorize and fund the program to continue its critical mission. I stand ready to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do so.

Thank you and I yield back.