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City of Cape May, New Jersey
Written Testimony**

House Energy Mineral Resources Subcommittee Field

Hearing: "Examining the Benefits and Potential Challenges for New Jersey's Growing Offshore Wind Industry"

Monday, September 16, 2019 at 10:00 am

Wildwood Convention Center

Good morning, Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Gosar, members of the Subcommittee, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments from the City of Cape May, New Jersey, regarding offshore wind generation.

We are faced with a simple yet profound question: Is it possible to develop offshore wind farms in ways that benefit energy users and local economies without adverse consequences for commercial fishing areas and shipping lanes, without endangering marine life and its habitats, and without injuring our vital tourism industry?

As a coastal community, we are keenly aware of the importance of environmental issues that impact our people, commerce, marine life, and natural resources.

Cape May's elected officials are historically mindful of the treasure at our shores and off our coast. We have heard the terms "resiliency" and "sustainability" with increasing frequency and fervor over the last decade or so, as those terms gained greater meaning and impact. It is important to understand the implications of those terms and how they translate to action. In other words, balancing the benefits and costs of an offshore wind industry is vitally important to all coastal communities.

Broadly speaking, "coastal resilience" ensures that a community can "bounce back" after hazardous events like hurricanes, coastal storms,

or floods. This means more than simply reacting to catastrophes; it means that a community has the resources to overcome the damages caused by such events.

That means, in turn, that coastal communities like Cape May must take precautionary measures to protect our shores, beaches, back bays, wetlands, marine and wildlife habitats, residences, businesses, infrastructure — the entire community and its inhabitants — to assure everything and everyone survives and thrives.

We must be proactive in the face of a pending storm or other crisis, rather than to scramble reactively after it has passed through.

We know about weather emergencies. We need to know if there could be offshore wind turbine emergencies so we may be prepared with necessary resources and a plan of action to deal with any hazardous event before it happens, when it may be happening and after it has passed.

Public information is important. Public and community entities must develop and disseminate instructive materials and convene orientation sessions to teach residents and businesses how to be prepared and to stay safe — and — how to “bounce back.”

To that end:

- We seek assurances that wind turbines will not harm our lives, well-being and property.
- We seek assurances that wind turbines will not harm marine life and its habitats.
- We seek assurances that wind turbines will not harm birds and other onshore wildlife and their habitats.
- We seek assurances that wind turbines will not disrupt commercial fisheries and recreational fishing.
- We seek assurances that wind turbines will not disrupt shipping lanes.

- We seek assurances that wind turbines will provide economic benefits for local economies and local residents -- for example, in the form of new jobs and lower energy costs.

That said, we also recognize the dangers of climate change and the havoc it has wreaked on our lives, properties, economy, environment, wildlife and natural resources.

We understand greater investment in renewable energy sources, especially in vastly untapped offshore wind generation, could resolve many of the problems we now face.

The Cape May City Council has passed two recent resolutions opposing offshore drilling or seismic blasting, noting the coastline, back bays, estuaries and related waterways are essential to the health of our City and its environmental and economic well-being. We oppose any public or private activities that could disrupt our marine ecosystems and fishery and tourism economies.

I reached out to members of Cape May's City Council — Deputy Mayor Patricia Gray Hendricks, Council Members Shaine Meier, Zack Mullock and Stacy Sheehan — for their insights on an offshore wind industry. All agreed that I offer testimony today and all agreed that the ultimate benefits of offshore wind farms must far exceed the costs or disadvantages.

I also asked for input from our City's Environmental Commission. The commission is pursuing an active research and action agenda related to an array of issues, especially those involving clean waterways and oceans and the protection of wildflowers and wildlife.

Our oceans have become "landfills" for discarded plastics, and the City's Environmental Commission has worked diligently to encourage passage of local policies banning single use plastic containers.

Along with these comments, I am submitting the energy master plan of the City's Environmental Commission and the "green team" of Cape May. These groups drew upon many sources to help mobilize efforts to ensure that proposed implementation of wind turbine solutions conform to acceptable, environmentally safe, and sustainable practices. These reports conclude that incorporating renewable energy, through the creation of offshore wind, will boost clean energy and slash greenhouse gas emissions.

The City recognizes South Jersey's reliance on a tourism economy. We are also increasingly mindful of the importance of our fisheries economy.

Cape May area's commercial fishing industry is robust, and we are committed to keeping it so. This vital enterprise could be lost in a moment if there were an offshore drilling or oil tanker accident. It is natural that we seek assurances that off-shore wind production does not pose similar commercial or environmental hazards.

The Port of Cape May is the second largest commercial fishing port on the east coast and the ninth largest in the United States. Three years ago, commercial fisheries at Cape May port harvested 47 million tons of fish, according to a NOAA report. Cape May's scallop fishing business is extremely competitive and particularly lucrative. It should continue to be recognized and rewarded through public and private support that facilitates its safe, effective, resilient operations.

It is also important to understand that commercial fisheries contribute to local, regional and state economies by employing people with diverse skills, from crew members on vessels, to people in processing plants, to maintenance staff, to accountants, managers and administrators. They purchase untold dollars' worth of groceries, ice and other supplies; buy untold gallons of fuel; hire welders and electricians and others for boat repairs and maintenance. Their employees are taxpayers and consumers of housing, food, health,

entertainment and other living expenses. We look forward to an emerging job market related to offshore wind farms.

In resort communities we know the value of the tourist trade. We should be similarly mindful of the economic boost derived from our commercial and sport fisheries.

Like most shore communities, Cape May has popular sport and recreational fishing operations. These attractions also aid the local economy.

All of this could be adversely affected if public and private stakeholders do not recognize their appropriate role in supporting sustainable, resilient commercial interests.

We encourage our Congressional representatives to establish a set of principles on responsible wind power -- for example, those put forward by the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society -- that might guide us all to think and live green. Such a set of guiding policies, for example, would consider:

- Offering public education to assure wide and timely distribution of user-friendly information about the purpose, expectations, advantages and disadvantages of offshore wind power so citizens are aware of evolving plans and their potential impact, economically and environmentally.
- Inviting stakeholder participation in reviewing the consequences of prior actions and evolving plans and offering progress reports early and often;
- Being guided by the best available science, technology and the real time experience of offshore wind industry leaders;
- Where there are gaps in knowledge, seeking adequate funding and peer-reviewed research to close the gaps;
- Understanding and acting on what is needed to avoid or minimize adverse effects on people, their communities, commerce, wildlife and their habitats;

- Assuring public and private resources are made available to plan, review, carry out, monitor and provide regular public reports and public forums on the effectiveness, benefits and any unexpected consequences — positive and negative — of offshore wind power projects.

We have read, with increasing interest, the experience of Orsted and its involvement in New Jersey's plans for offshore wind production. We look forward to learning more about the related economic development possibilities for South Jersey and the greater Cape May area. We are also interested in Orsted's "lessons learned" and what the company proposes as conditions for success in developing renewable energy sources, most notably offshore wind resources.

I would have treasured the opportunity to have had a conversation with the late Danny Cohen before testifying today. Danny was the founder and CEO of Atlantic Capes Fisheries. He was a unique visionary. He acknowledged that his role as the CEO of a large commercial fisheries operation made his interests and actions as a renewable energy advocate appear counterintuitive. The fishing industry is naturally opposed to built structures in the ocean. But more than a decade ago, Danny led the fisheries industry in organizing to build offshore wind farms — to become agents of change rather than its victims.

Danny urged us all to rise to the challenge of climate change, wisely, openly, steadily because he knew, as do we, that our children and their children and all the children of tomorrow depend on how we respond to the economic and environmental challenges we face today.

Thank you.