COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
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Opening Statement of Ranking Member Stephanie Bice

Environment Subcommittee Hearing – Silent Killer: The Rising Problem of Extreme Heat in the U.S.

July 21, 2021

Good morning Chairwoman Sherrill. Thank you for holding today's timely and important hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for appearing before the subcommittee and sharing their expertise with us this morning.

This summer, historic heatwaves across the U.S. have made headlines week after week and the impacts have been tragic. Many outdoor business operations have been curbed out of concern for operational safety, resulting in significant economic losses. This comes on top of the crippling effects the COVID-19 pandemic has already had. Even more tragic is the number of lives that have been lost in heat-related deaths this summer alone. As a couple of our witnesses will point out, heat related deaths of Americans outnumber the fatalities connected to all other natural disasters.

Although climate change is likely making the occurrence of extreme heat more common, we cannot simply sit back and accept such a fate. With greater innovation and strategic planning from both the public and private sector, negative affects from heat waves and other extreme weather events can be better mitigated and lives can be saved. One such example of a private entity acting now is Tomorrow.io, whose CEO and co-founder, Shimon Elkabetz, is here today as a witness.

While the National Weather Service provides important weather forecasts and warnings, it can be hard for people to interpret what this data means for them as individuals. Tomorrow.io helps alleviate that confusion by communicating weather forecasts in a clear, operationally focused manner. For example, Tomorrow.io can monitor when and where heat will exceed a specific threshold that will make an electric grid susceptible to outages. Utility companies can use this information to make more informed decisions regarding grid operations. The risk of a power outage occurring can also be conveyed to utility customers so that they may prepare back-up plans for staying cool.

Tomorrow.io is an excellent example of how commercial enterprises can successfully collaborate with the federal government to accelerate technological advances and

improve weather forecasts, as well as communication of forecasts. Tomorrow.io uses publicly available data and incorporates it into their own in-house models to provide more localized forecasts. They also do this in a manner that, when utilized by government agencies, can save millions in taxpayer dollars compared to an exclusive federal operation. If encouraging more public-private partnerships like this can save lives and money, then by all means we should do all we can to increase the participation of the private sector.

To close, I want to paint somewhat of a positive light, because I believe societal progress is too often overlooked for attention grabbing headlines. It's important to remember that the rising cost of disasters is closely related to the overall rise in economic development. Extreme events are more costly because we have more infrastructure to damage, not just because of the complex relationship between intensity and climate. In fact, direct economic losses from disasters, as a proportion of global GDP, have trended down over the past 30 years.

And just last week, the Rhodium Group published a report that predicted U.S. emission reductions could reach as much as 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, exceeding the Paris Accord goal of the Obama Administration.

We're on the right track and it is always my goal to make more progress. But before we take every negative headline as an unavoidable future, we should first understand what we have been doing right, what we need to fix, and how we take action to ensure our positive trends continue.

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill. I yield back.