



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Gabe Amo (D-RI)

Environment Subcommittee Hearing:

“Advancing Environmental Protection Through Science and Technology”

June 4, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Franklin, for holding today’s hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency’s science and technology activities. I also want to thank Dr. Maureen Gwinn for appearing before the Committee today.

Before I begin, I want to make something clear. Dr. Gwinn, my frustration today is not directed at you. You have spent over a decade serving the American people as a scientist and public servant.

However, it is unacceptable that EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin has decided to cower behind you rather than face the music. The American people deserve answers directly from the source on why he’s sold out their health and well-being to the highest bidder. Because over the last year, Administrator Zeldin has carried out what may be the most sweeping attacks on scientific independence in EPA's history.

This Committee has made multiple attempts to obtain information on Zeldin’s plans. Yet, time and again, EPA has responded with stonewalling, half-answers, and missing information about the impact on the Agency’s mission to protect human health and the environment. To be clear, this is about whether non-partisan, independent, peer-reviewed scientific evidence will continue to guide environmental policy in the United States or whether extreme, right-wing political ideology and corporate polluters will.

For decades, the Office of Research and Development, or ORD, served as EPA’s independent scientific backbone. ORD scientists researched various emerging threats, developed new testing methods, and provided the research that helped keep Americans safe. When lead contaminated drinking water, ORD helped identify the danger. When PFAS threatened communities across the country, ORD developed the science needed to detect and understand the risk. When corporate polluters threatened public health, ORD provided the evidence that informed EPA action on pollution limits. For decades, ORD saved lives because it had the independence to follow the evidence wherever it led.

As a National Program Office, it was separate from regulatory offices and free to conduct rigorous, lifesaving scientific research without interference. That is what science is supposed to

do: follow the evidence where it leads, challenge assumptions, and tell us uncomfortable truths. That independence is exactly what made ORD valuable. And it is exactly what this Administration has dismantled.

Trump and Zeldin would rather base EPA actions on the whims of the highest bidder than the well-being of the American people. When the Trump EPA bullied, intimidated, and pushed out hundreds of ORD scientists, it didn't just eliminate positions on an organizational chart. They eliminated expertise. They weakened America's ability to identify the next environmental threat before it becomes a public health crisis.

Now we are wondering: Who will be there to discover the next PFAS? Who will be there to call out the long-term effects of microplastics in our bodies or wildfire smoke in our lungs? Who will be there to protect our children? Who is looking around the corner for dangers we cannot yet see?

Those are questions Americans should never have to ask. But when you push out scientists, dismantle independent research, and silence inconvenient findings, those questions become a lot harder to answer. Instead, Administrator Zeldin dismantled ORD and replaced it with the Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions, or OASES, housed directly under the Office of the Administrator.

But the Agency didn't stop there. An internal memo establishes an "Interim Approval Process" requiring political leadership to review and approve OASES' work to ensure there are, quote, "no surprises." Let's call it what it is — putting a tight leash and muzzle on scientists to ensure they only produce research that mirrors Trump and Zeldin's pro-polluter agenda.

When you dismantle an independent scientific office, remove its autonomy, and formalize political interference in research, the outcome is predictable: science suffers, accountability suffers, and ultimately the American people are less safe.

Dr. Gwinn, I hope you can help this Committee understand how EPA intends to restore its scientific integrity, what science will be conducted within OASES, and whether the Agency can continue to perform the high-quality research that the American people need to protect their health and their future.

Thank you for your service. I yield back.