



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Opening Statement (*As Prepared for Delivery*)

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U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Creating a Climate Resilient America

May 23, 2019

Good morning. Our last hearing focused on drawing down carbon pollution while building up the American economy. Today we are examining another important component of climate action: preparing for the *consequences* of the climate crisis - consequences that are here already and what is to come.

We need to create a climate resilient America. Floodwaters, extreme heat, wildfires: they do not care if we live in a red district or a blue district. In Florida, Republicans and Democrats at the local level are working together to protect the places we know and love. We can do the same in Washington, DC.

The climate crisis isn't somebody else's problem. It's everyone's problem.

There are more than 300,000 coastal homes worth a total value of almost \$120 billion that are expected to face chronic flooding in the next 30 years. When the seas rise, so does the cost to American families on our coasts.

When brutal heat waves hit our communities, people get sick and agricultural crops and animals suffer. If we fail to take action, the cost of extreme heat and poor air quality from the climate crisis could add up to \$167 billion a year. And we could lose another \$155 billion a year simply from days when it is too hot for people to work outside, according to the National Climate Assessment.

And then there are the disasters. The number of billion-dollar weather disasters in the United States has more than doubled in recent years. 2017 set a record with more than \$300 billion worth of damage. 2018 was close behind with nearly \$100 billion. Many of these disasters are worse because of the climate crisis, including wildfires, dramatic swings in rainfall, and coastal storm surge.

When these disasters happen, we have a moral obligation to help. It's frustrating that so many Americans in Puerto Rico, Florida and across the country are still waiting for help in the aftermath of disasters. Because solving the climate crisis also requires a commitment to climate justice. That means correcting the injustices that leave so many people, especially people of color, vulnerable to flooding, heat waves and wildfires.

These are daunting problems, but the good news is we have solutions. We can protect our communities from the climate crisis, while we cut the carbon pollution that is causing the climate to change in the first place.

For instance, energy efficiency and a smarter grid helps keeps power flowing and air conditioning going during dangerous heat waves. That saves lives.

And when we restore wetlands on our coast, those trees and plants can absorb the devastating power of coastal storms. And they absorb something else as they grow: carbon.

And increasingly farmers are adjusting their practices to increase soil health which makes farms more resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and increases carbon stored in the soil.

As we continue our work, we are looking for solutions to the climate crisis that provide multiple benefits - that reduce carbon pollution, that protect communities and create good jobs. The costs of the climate crisis are already adding up. It's time to invest in climate solutions.

But it more than just dollars. It's about leaving our children a cleaner, safer and healthier world.

The millions of young people who are joining climate strikes tomorrow have never lived in a normal climate - and they know it. That's why they're demanding climate action now, because we need to start baking the climate crisis into every decision we make - on energy, on transportation, on agriculture, on infrastructure.

The climate crisis is here. And we need to act like it. This is personal. This is happening to our neighbors. This is happening to us. When disasters happen, we should put the politics of the day aside, come together, and solve problems. Our expert witnesses will recommend policies to do so, because we need to come together to take climate action now. We are all in this together.