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Member Day Testimony before the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Chairwoman Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the residents of California's 39th Congressional District on the critical need to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and ensure our communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change. In my district, as across the nation and around the world, we are seeing more and more examples of the immediacy of this crisis and its harmful effects on our communities.

Just last month, brush fires in Yorba Linda, Brea, Fullerton, and across my district sparked fear, widespread power outages, and poor air quality for my constituents. As the world continues to warm, wildfires are expected to get bigger and more frequent and the science is not in our favor. Earlier this year, a report by the Union of Concerned of Scientists projected that without climate action, the annual number of heat-index days at 90 degrees or higher in Orange County will increase by 300% by mid-century and over 600% by 2099.

It is our responsibility in Congress to lead our country and the larger global community to move beyond partisanship and enact prudent solutions that improve lives and safeguard the future. To truly address the climate crisis, potential solutions need to be examined across every aspect of federal policymaking. I urge you to charge Congress with enacting legislation to 1) advance innovation in the energy sector to decrease our dependence on carbon; 2) support the deployment of green transportation infrastructure; 3) modernize Department of Defense policies to address the national security vulnerabilities of climate change; 4) help communities prevent climate disasters, rather than merely respond after the fact; and 5) preserve our natural resources and open spaces.

SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT

I am a strong supporter of the bipartisan Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act and urge this committee to closely examine the proposal. This legislation would put a price on carbon pollution, speeding our transition to a clean-energy economy by incentivizing conservation and innovation. It takes a market-based approach that doesn't grow the size of government, instead returning the revenue raised directly to households as a dividend. The bill projects reductions in carbon pollution of 90 percent by 2050, compared with 2016 levels, while especially protecting the interests of those in the middle class and at the margins.

Our tax code should incentivize clean energy use. Earlier this month, I joined my fellow members of the New Democrat Coalition, Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition, and the Congressional Progressive Caucus in calling for prioritization of legislation to advance clean energy tax policies by the end of the year to help us attain our emissions reductions goal and combat climate change. Tax incentives to promote energy storage, zero emission vehicles, offshore wind, and energy efficiency are critical to promoting cleaner energy use among individuals and businesses.

ADVANCE GREEN TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

I urge the Committee to support deployment of green transportation infrastructure, creating jobs while addressing climate change. In 2017, the transportation sector accounted for 29% of our nation's total emissions of 6.4 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Encouraging better emission vehicles and improved transit systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions must be a component of your climate change plan.

In California, we are already taking major steps towards addressing climate change in our transportation systems by requiring all public transit buses to switch from dirty diesel fuel to zero-emission technology. Transit agencies in my district have admirably fully embraced this challenge, navigating new logistical challenges for how to best install charging stations throughout their existing systems with limited financial and technical support from the federal government. I support H.R. 2164, the Green Bus Act, to help replicate this success nationwide but urge you to ensure increased federal support is available. If other communities are to follow California's lead, the federal government must play a leadership role in providing technical and financial assistance to ensure seamless deployment.

While several car companies have made great strides to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through better fuel economy in their vehicles, more needs to be done. I was highly disappointed with the President's decision to abandon the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) for model years 2021 to 2025. These regulations were carefully negotiated with manufacturers, labor, and environmental groups to reduce pollution and spur innovation within the industry. I support legislation, H.R. 978, the Clean and Efficient Cars Act of 2019, to preserve these fuel economy and vehicle emission standards that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save drivers money at the pump.

DEFENSE

We must protect our nation's foreign policy interests and those of our military. As the Pentagon's own reports consistently confirm, the effects of a changing climate are a national security issue. Climate change makes our military bases more vulnerable and missions more complicated. That's why I worked to secure a provision in the House-approved Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Department of Defense to explore the possibility of maintaining plug-in hybrid and electric government vehicle fleets on military installations. It also directs the Pentagon to consider building microgrid infrastructure to support green vehicles and secure systems to support them.

I also support legislation H.R. 1201, Climate Change National Security Act, which would restore directives on national security and climate change requiring the federal government to consider

the impacts of climate change in the development of relevant national security policies. Further, I support H.R. 2759, Department of Defense Climate Resiliency & Readiness Act, which would direct the Department of Defense to take a number of steps to make the Department more climate resilient, including establishing key benchmarks for energy goals, increasing transparency in contracting, and directing Departmental focus on climate and resiliency.

PREVENT CLIMATE DISASTERS

Like many states, California has been directly impacted by the devastating natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. Millions of dollars are spent fighting intensifying blazes during our now year-round fire season in California. We must invest in research nationwide on fire-related issues to advance seasonal wildfire forecasts, but also help forestry agencies prepare for wildfire events to mediate their devastating effects. I support legislation like H.R. 4924, the Smoke Planning and Research Act, to help state and local governments protect their communities from the public risks of wildfire smokes.

PRESERVE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACES

We must prioritize the conservation of our public natural lands. Protection of our natural lands is a win for both the environment and for the reduction of greenhouse gases, as national parks, forests, and other public lands have been valued for their ability to absorb and store carbon and other air pollutants.

This is why I support H.R. 3195, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act, which would provide for permanent funding dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund to protect conservation funds.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I know you have a tough job ahead of you and I hope you will keep my testimony on behalf of my constituents in California's 39th Congressional District in mind as you recommend policies to advance as it relates to our nation's strategy in combating climate change.