

**Prepared Testimony of Rep. Paul D. Tonko (NY-20)  
before the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis Member Day  
Thursday, November 14, 2019**

Chair Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Select Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify and for all your work to advance meaningful and necessary climate action.

The scale and scope of this crisis demand an all-hands-on-deck approach. Much like the Select Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee has been holding hearings and stakeholder roundtables to better understand what opportunities, challenges, and potential solutions should be considered as part of comprehensive legislation.

As a precursor to these hearings, I undertook a years-long process meeting with hundreds of stakeholders and seeking their perspectives and policy priorities.

This input proved critically important to developing a set of 9 principles for climate action, which were released earlier this year.

I will not go through that entire framework today, but I hope the Committee will consider it as a helpful rubric for building and evaluating comprehensive climate proposals.

This process has also revealed several insights that may be useful to you now.

Our next step must be to draw from areas of agreement and build specific policies and legislative language.

Most importantly, we need a broad portfolio of solutions. No one policy will decarbonize the entire economy on its own.

The transition to a clean economy will create opportunities that can benefit American workers, families, and communities if we act quickly and thoughtfully. But our approach must also acknowledge challenges.

First, it must provide fairness and opportunities for workers and a transition plan for communities and individuals that face disruptions.

Second, we must ensure that the transition works for all Americans and addresses historic inequities and environmental injustices.

Third, we must maintain energy affordability to avoid harming America's most vulnerable people.

Fourth, we need to restore and strengthen U.S. competitiveness, particularly in domestic manufacturing.

Regarding specific solutions, I am certain we have heard many of the same suggestions. Therefore, it might be useful to mention a few aspects that might be overlooked or underappreciated.

In power, no credible modeler believes we can achieve 80 percent or more clean electricity with our existing infrastructure alone.

We need to build more transmission, reduce regulatory barriers that cause new lines to take a decade to build, and increase the capacity and efficiency of existing lines. This will not be politically popular, but it is necessary.

In transportation, we should “electrify-as-much-as-possible,” but there are limitations that require us to develop other clean alternatives.

Hydrogen fuel cells have great potential, especially for long-haul trucking that benefits from fast refueling without the heavy weight of batteries. Similarly, cleaner liquid fuels will likely be needed for aviation. We must continue investing in R&D and encouraging market demand for these alternatives.

For industry, regardless of your feelings on CCS in the power sector, carbon capture for certain types of industrial facilities will likely be necessary. Again, raising demand for low-emissions industrial products can be a major driver for innovation.

Among economy-wide mechanisms, carbon pricing is a potentially powerful part of our toolkit. A strong price signal will spur investment and innovation in low-emissions alternatives.

But not all carbon pricing programs are created equally. Good design matters, and successful programs can take different approaches.

Whether we are considering a tax, fee, or emissions trading system, first and foremost, it must provide emissions reductions certainty.

Second, the best results will come from covering as much of the economy as technically and politically feasible while being technology-inclusive.

Third, the program must be credible and provide certainty in order to impact long-term investment decisions.

Fourth, it should provide flexibility for regulated entities to the extent that it does not undermine the integrity of the program or result in harmful, inequitable outcomes.

Fifth, it must protect low-income households as well as the global competitiveness of U.S. energy-intensive, trade-exposed manufacturers.

And finally, at least some revenues must go toward complementary policies that promote R&D, infrastructure deployment, workforce development, community and worker programs, environmental justice and restoration, resilience, and energy efficiency.

These types of investments will help make emissions reductions both quicker and cheaper.

10 years have passed since Congress last attempted comprehensive climate legislation.

If our intention is to avoid the most dangerous and irreversible aspects of climate change, our next opportunity to confront this crisis will likely be our last.

I am eager to work with this Committee and any member interested in ensuring this attempt succeeds.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.