



**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor
Hearing on “Solving the Climate Crisis:
Building a Vibrant and Just Clean Energy Economy”
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
July 28, 2020**

As prepared for delivery

America is reeling from a number of interrelated and severe crises that I believe can be solved through transformational action and leadership. First, the coronavirus pandemic, which has tragically taken the lives of nearly 150,000 Americans, is crying out for a coordinated plan of action to control the virus and save lives. (Florida posted 186 deaths today – the largest one-day increase so far.) The pandemic also sparked an economic crisis, leaving millions of Americans without jobs as businesses shut down in response to the health emergency. In the middle of all this, we also witnessed the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis, which was a tragic reminder of the systemic racism that still plagues our communities – and the urgent need for racial justice in the United States. Plus, the ongoing climate crisis continues to fuel extreme events like floods, intense storms and wildfires, and increase costs on families and businesses.

Congress must rise to the occasion. We must heed the calls for racial justice, protect the health of our families, help our neighbors get back to work and rebuild our economy in a resilient way that reduces greenhouse gas pollution and protects the air we breathe. We have a moral obligation to solve the climate crisis and build back better for decades to come.

Solving the climate crisis is hard work, but it is within our reach. And it gives us a chance to build an America that is stronger and more resilient to these serious challenges. Investing in clean energy gives us an opportunity to create millions of good-paying, family sustaining jobs – that will get Americans back to work and strengthen our middle class. It can also make our communities healthier, as we deploy innovative technologies that will reduce pollution. And it can help us repair the injustices of the past - as we commit to invest in the Black and brown communities disproportionately harmed by the climate crisis.

Today we’ll discuss how to build a vibrant clean energy economy, one that centers environmental justice at its core. We’ll hear about ways to grow our manufacturing base and create well-paying American jobs by modernizing our grid. And we’ll discuss initiatives to revive our economy, while reducing pollution and creating more resilient communities.

This is our first hearing since Select Committee Democrats released the majority staff report ‘**Solving the Climate Crisis**’, a comprehensive framework to cut carbon pollution in line with climate science and create the clean energy economy that we desperately need. I’d like to thank

the thousands of stakeholders who informed our action plan – scientists, farmers, entrepreneurs, young people, EJ leaders, workers, indigenous people and our outstanding professional staff. According to independent analysis, our plan would save over 60,000 lives every year by 2050, while also providing at least \$8 trillion in climate and health benefits alone. It would also create economic opportunities by investing in America’s workers and communities, including establishing a National Economic Transition Office to help with the transition to a net-zero emission economy.

I know our Republican colleagues have been reviewing the majority staff recommendations. I look forward to hearing their recommendations to help solve the climate crisis. Since the Democrats have put forward ideas, I hope that our Republican colleagues will do the same so we can discuss potential bipartisan recommendations since previous staff attempts to start discussions have not progressed.

Workers are at the center of our climate action plan. Between March and May, more than 620,000 clean energy workers, nearly a fifth of the industry’s workforce, filed for unemployment benefits. As many states began to reopen, the U.S. economy added jobs in June, but only 106,000 of those jobs were in clean energy, leaving more than half a million clean energy workers still unemployed.

As you’ll hear from our witnesses, climate solutions are economic solutions. Which is why they’ve helped develop platforms to put workers and families first, addressing injustices in vulnerable communities, with an eye to building a recovery on a stronger and more equitable foundation.

As we rebound from our current economic crisis, let’s power America’s recovery through investments in clean energy, energy efficiency, and conservation – and put money back into families’ pockets when they need it. We can expand our manufacturing base and build the technologies the world will need to solve the climate crisis. We can invest in a 21st century infrastructure that can help cut carbon pollution and withstand climate impacts. And we can create jobs, jobs, jobs – good-paying jobs that move us toward net-zero emissions by 2050. With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.