



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
**CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Cleaner, Cheaper Energy:  
Climate Investments to Help Families and Businesses”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
December 9, 2021**

*As prepared for delivery*

Investing in clean energy will make America healthier and more resilient - and unleash incredible economic benefits for American families, such as reducing the costs of energy, lowering electric bills, reducing the cost of traveling, and creating millions of family-sustaining jobs. By investing in clean electricity, energy efficiency and electric appliances and vehicles, we will lower energy prices for families and businesses alike and cushion Americans from the volatile prices of fossil fuels. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law made progress, and the Build Back Better Act will take us farther.

For decades, Americans have powered their homes, cars, and businesses almost exclusively through the burning of fossil fuels. But these fuels have come at a cost to our health and to the pocketbooks of working Americans, including rising property insurance rates due to climate fueled storms, droughts, and fires. Whether it’s price spikes at the gasoline pump or on utility bills, rising energy costs can strain the budgets of working families. There are many factors behind the current costs of energy. The impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, global oil market dynamics, repercussions of natural disasters, and increased U.S. natural gas exports all have a hand in driving up prices.

We are taking action. The Build Back Better Act will put more money in the pockets of working Americans rather than excessive oil company and electric utility profits. Households could save about \$500 dollars every year just on energy costs by embracing renewables, electric vehicles, home weatherization and electric appliances. The Build Back Better Act also will ensure these savings reach all Americans, by making grants and loans available to rural communities and directing investments to environmental justice communities.

The Build Back Better Act also will help more Americans make the switch to money-saving (and fun-to-drive) electric cars and trucks. Thanks to lower maintenance and fuel costs, families can save up to \$10,000 dollars over the life of the vehicle by driving an electric car compared to a gas-powered one. These savings are doubled for rural drivers, who often go longer distances and spend more on maintenance. And with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EV drivers will have more places to charge their electric cars and trucks – thanks to a historic investment to build up to 500,000 charging stations across America by 2030. At home in Tampa on Monday, leaders of the Electrical Workers union cheered the new investments, because they have developed apprenticeship training for workers to build charging stations and electric grids enhancements, and they are ready for new careers that pay great wages.

The Build Back Better Act also will help cut air pollution and reduce the financial costs of fossil fuels that cost us up to \$870 billion dollars a year in lost income and health care costs. It will improve the lives of the 70 million people of color who live in counties with failing pollution grades, exposing them to deadly threats like asthma and cancer. The Build Back Better Act invests in environmental justice for these Americans, directing at least 40% of investments to the communities most affected by pollution.

As winter arrives, it's crucial to help more families save money through electrification. When it comes to heating homes, the EIA forecasts that families who use fossil fuels could see large increases on their heating bills: 54% for propane, 43% for home heating oil, and 30% for gas. In contrast, families who use electricity for heat are only expected to see a 6% jump. That's because the price of electricity, unlike the price of gas, remains comparatively stable. And it's just one more reason why Congress must continue to make electrification easier and more accessible for American families.

Rising fuel prices are only further proof that we must accelerate the transition to clean energy as quickly as possible. We cannot remain stuck in the past. It's time to look to the future – as we invest in the clean technologies that will help us lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and solve the climate crisis.

I look forward to today's discussion.