



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
**CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Confronting Climate Impacts:  
Federal Strategies for Equitable Adaptation and Resilience”  
March 9, 2022**

*As prepared for delivery*

For decades, scientists have warned us that our reliance on fossil fuels is filling the atmosphere with heat-trapping pollution, raising global temperatures, and fueling extreme weather. They warned us that rising temperatures would lead to worsening disasters, stronger heat waves, and longer droughts. Those predictions are now our reality. Families and businesses are dealing with the costs and the consequences of climate inaction. And while we can still avoid the worst effects of climate change, some impacts are now unavoidable. It is not too late, however, to avoid some of the worst scenarios – if we act.

While we take ambitious steps to keep climate change from getting worse, we also must urgently confront the impacts that are already here. That means developing a national adaptation and resilience strategy, one that delivers actionable tools and resources to frontline communities across America. It means taking global action to help communities develop climate-resilient economies. It means safeguarding our food and our farmers. And it means investing in strengthening housing and infrastructure, directing growth toward safer ground, and prioritizing investments for our most vulnerable people. We must also engage in adaptation planning designed with local partners, engaging them early and meaningfully, so we can benefit from their insight and experience. And we must do all this in ways that are equitable, sustainable, and urgent.

It’s one thing to read about climate impacts in a scientific report. It’s quite another to feel them in your own neighborhood. But that’s what’s happening across America. Just last year, climate-fueled disasters affected one in ten American homes, according to analysis by CoreLogic. In the summer, the Pacific Northwest experienced a deadly heatwave with record-shattering temperatures of more than 110 degrees. The Southwest is in the midst of a 20-plus-year megadrought, the region’s most severe in the last 1,200 years. And over the next 30 years, the National Ocean Service estimates that flooding will be 10 times as common in communities like my own, where sea level could rise as much as 12 inches.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change presents one of the starkest warnings to date. Even if we meet our most ambitious climate goals, the world’s leading scientists predict we will suffer losses – we may lose most of the world’s tropical coral reefs by the end of the century, as well as much of our glaciers and polar ice. We will continue to lose species and ecosystems at a rapid clip. And if we don’t act decisively, we’ll face widespread human suffering, with destabilized food production, water scarcity, and a global economy plagued by uncertainty. It’s a dire economic picture that we simply cannot allow to happen.

However, the IPCC report also contains a message of hope – and of urgency. Every dollar we spend today on adaptation and resilience can save us between \$4 and \$7 in the future. And investing in resilient infrastructure can save lives and lessen the impacts of extreme weather. That’s why we worked to pass President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which includes the largest investment in resilient physical and natural infrastructure in American history. The Infrastructure Law invests over \$50 billion to protect against droughts, heat, floods, and wildfires. It includes \$1 billion for FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, as well as \$3.5 billion for Flood Mitigation Assistance Grants. And it makes historic investments in wildfire resilience, water infrastructure, transportation planning, and grid resilience.

There is still progress to be made. As of today, the United States has no comprehensive federal approach for climate adaptation and resilience planning. That results in an inefficient, ad hoc system – one that exacerbates risks to our communities, our national economy, and our national security. In order to fully meet this challenge, we must create a national adaptation and resilience strategy that prioritizes vulnerable populations and transitions them away from the riskiest areas. We need to significantly increase technical and financial assistance to vulnerable communities around the world. We need to establish a Climate Risk Information Service to deliver actionable data and tools. And we must ensure federally-funded projects conform to the latest codes and standards for resilience and energy efficiency.

Today, we’ll hear from experts on how Congress can help Americans adapt to climate impacts, in a way that’s equitable for every community. We’ll talk about the tools needed to help communities manage unavoidable climate impacts. And we’ll explore ways to boost resilience across the nation. I look forward to our conversation.