

MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Summer LEE

Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Location: 2323 Rayburn House Office Building, John D. Dingell Hearing Room

Subject: 2023 House Energy & Commerce Committee Member Day

REMARKS:

Thank you, Chairwoman Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone, for the opportunity to present before this committee today.

I proudly hail from western Pennsylvania, representing my constituents on the House Oversight and Accountability and House Science, Space, and Technology committees. My work across these bodies strives for excellence in enhanced innovation and problem-solving through the funding and direction we provide the scientific agencies to carry out ground-breaking research, as well as to ensure accountability in all facets of governance.

But here today before the Energy and Commerce committee, I look to further serve those I represent back home by using this platform to highlight and address the climate crisis and various environmental justice issues that have long plagued neighborhoods like the one I grew up in.

My passion for environmental justice comes through necessity, not academic or professional expertise. Where I grew up in Braddock, in the Mon Valley, the air we breathe is so dirty that we have some of the highest rates of pollution causing childhood asthma, COPD, emphysema, and other respiratory illnesses in this country.

The American Lung Association's 2023 "State of the Air" report highlighted that ozone smog pollution levels in the [Pittsburgh-New Castle-Weirton](#) metro area have declined, yet the metro area I represent is *still* among the worst 25 metro areas in the country for both short-term and

year-round particle pollution. Dirty air is killing people—and it is disproportionately harming Black and brown communities.

Black people are exposed to 1.54 times more fine particulate matter than white people and are 3 times more likely to die due to air pollutants. And Black women have the highest death rate at the hands of asthma.

The people know damn well that for this country to be a place where everyone can thrive, we *CANNOT* let corporate polluters pump toxins into any more Black, brown, and poor communities on the backs of taxpayers. We cannot let fossil fuel billionaires and the politicians they bankroll turn us against each other. We cannot let them call us “radical” for organizing for the survival of our children—and then blame us for the economic pain they inflict on all of us to rake in billions while extreme weather disasters increase in frequency, severity, and the cost to human life.

Whether or not they are willing to say so publicly or through their votes in this chamber, every member of this Committee, irrespective of party affiliation, represents families who are concerned or affected by the changes they see and feel in their environment. *We are in the midst of a climate crisis.* It is unacceptable to continue to be okay with communities like the one I am from being sacrificial lambs in the name of energy innovation.

Energy security must include better welfare and living standards for our constituents. Millions of structures in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania stand on top of old and abandoned underground mines. In fact, my constituents are often advised to purchase subsidence insurance in case their homes ever cave in. Powering our homes and industries *should not and must not* mean that our constituents must live in fear for their lives and property.

I am a strong advocate and supporter for a clean energy future that does not rely on fossil energy. Environmental protection and addressing environmental injustices are not mutually exclusive

from supporting communities with resources and employment opportunities. We need and can have both.

I remain steadfast in reaffirming that Pittsburgh's long and proud history of innovation will continue as we invest in research and development, with a paramount focus on safety, health, and security for *every* community.

This being said, I would like to use this opportunity to request from the Chairwoman and Ranking Member, that this committee schedule and conduct hearings that invite members of communities that have suffered at the intersection of racial and environmental injustice to speak to their realities, as well as investigate fossil fuel billionaires who rake in billions as our planet burns and communities are ravaged. The polluters that caused the climate crisis should be held accountable, and I believe this committee has a duty to ensure that they are.