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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

VIRTUAL HEARING

ON BUILDING A 100 PERCENT CLEAN ECONOMY:

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITABLE, LOW-CARBON RECOVERY

TESTIMONY BY

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Chairman Paul Tonko, Environment and Climate Subcommittee
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr, Energy and Commerce

Chairman Tonko and honorable members of the Environment and Climate Subcommittee, Thankyou for the opportunity to speak to you today about building a 100% clean economy that is both low-carbon and equitable.

My name is Denise Fairchild. I am the President & CEO of Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC), a national non-profit organization with a triple-bottom line mission: to green our cities, build our communities and strengthen of democracy through equity and inclusion.

ECC formed 10 years ago during our last economic crisis - as a coalition of community, business, labor and sustainability organizations – to work across our special interests and to leverage our

assets to build a new high road economy that worked at the intersection of environment, economy and equity.

I am witness to the possibilities in moving towards a justice centered clean economy, including retrofitting public buildings – saving energy, water, money, and carbon emissions. Creating greener and healthier homes for thousands of low-income families. Shepherding black and brown youth into union apprenticeships and increasing family wage jobs and minority contracting opportunities in the green building, green (water) and sustainable food sector.

We are proud of our hard-fought gains and to be an early leader in advancing high road policies and strategies. We remain fully committed to a carbon free economy, rebuilding our middle class and connecting disadvantaged communities to this new economy.

But there is a lot more to do this time around.

What We Now Know

We learned a lot and we are in a different place today than we were 10 years ago. We have both legacy and new 21st Century climate, economic and equity challenges that must be fixed.

Energy: The ARRA era climate economic recovery got us to the starting blocks. But we learned that these investments funded only short term jobs not careers. They did not get us off of fossil fuels. And most significant today… it did not mitigate our energy vulnerabilities to black out and brown outs. Above all, these investments did not democratize the energy sector to benefit everyone.

Food: The food sector is energy intensive. COVID exposed the deficiencies of our current centralized food system. Our food supply chain fell apart. Farmers were dumping milk, destroying food products that couldn't get to market. At that same time people (the market) waited hours in line at food banks.

Water: Our water/waste/stormwater infrastructure is also energy intensive, toxic and incapable of managing extreme weather. We need a climate resilient water infrastructure including installing, operating and maintaining green infrastructure, such as permeable pavements, shoreline restorations, watershed protection, erosion prevention, bioswales, tree planting and landscaping, among other projects.

Equity: We know that low-income, communities of color are last to get clean infrastructure investments and are under-represented in the clean economy. We will reproduce income and wealth inequalities if we do not get rid of the structural impediments to high wage careers and business opportunities for low-income, black, indigenous and communities of color (BIPOC) and women.

We know $80 billion was not enough for a just transition for fossil fuel workers or BIPOC and women.

Bouncing Forward

These are the lessons to carry forward into a new clean economy.

- **Climate Change**: We still need large investments in a carbon free/clean economy to mitigate climate change. But climate change is here. We also need a climate resilient economy to help us adapt to our new climate realities – fires, floods, hurricanes, black-outs, water and food shortages and more. We are living in a new era of constant disruptions. .. natural, man-made, cyber - so our economic infrastructure must be designed to fend off disruptions and mitigate and adapt to our new normal.

- **Climate Economy:** We need high wage jobs and business opportunities. But more importantly, we need an economy that is generative and not extractive, that shares the benefits of our climate economy and is co-governed with those most climate impacted and underrepresented communities to ensure that we are all full participants in shaping a clean economy future and are beneficiaries of the new economy.

- **Climate Equity:** We need equity-first strategies to invest in community infrastructure in communities most impacted by climate. We also need to reject equity washing and tokenism and confront long-standing and deep structural barriers to careers, contracts, capital, networks for historically underrepresented communities. African Americans and women are especially underrepresented as workers and businesses in the clean energy space, including environmental organizations; the clean energy sector, unionized construction trades.

In other words, rather than a "bounce back" climate economic recovery strategy, we need a "bounce forward" justice-centered economic resilience investment plan to transform our energy, water and food sectors towards:

- 100% Sustainable and Renewable.
- The needs of communities most affected by disproportionate rates of environmental, climate, health and economic disparities and injustices;
- Shorter supply chains that narrow the gap between producers and consumers to lower carbon emissions generated from processing and distribution.
- Decentralized/distributive infrastructure to increase redundancy and minimize disruptions imbedded in centralized energy, food and water distribution systems. Bringing renewable energy production closer to its end use substantially shortens the energy supply chain and reduces as much of 65% of energy waste in making energy and 6% in transmission and distribution. It also reduces wholesale black outs and brown

outs – think Puerto Rico -- that cripple entire economies and communities, especially energy dependent facilities and populations

- Democratic governance – engaging local residents and businesses as full participants and beneficiaries of the climate solutions. Distributed energy (DER) infrastructure such as building and ground mounted renewables, micro-grids, smart meters, distributive storage and other demand-side management technologies create the foundation for a 21st Century climate resilient and democratic energy sector.
- High road labor and community standards in jobs and business opportunities must be imbedded in the investment requirements.

This work is taking place across the U.S. We are transforming our local economies through smart technologies. We are aggregating institutional food purchasing contracts to support small, local farmers – urban and rural - over large-scale commercial sector to build local sustainable food economies. We are connecting rural communities to urban markets. We are turning consumers into energy producers through DER and community-owned energy cooperatives. We are de-monopolizing our economy and building capacity of a new generation of union workers and socially responsible contractors to contribute to and thrive in a 100% clean economy. And in the process we are reducing carbon emissions through soil sequestrian (26% from carbon capture, 18% from food processing (converting produce from farm into final product), transport, packaging and retail, from decentralized energy and water systems.

It's doable. Its necessary. But this work is undercapitalized. And underdeveloped. An equitable clean energy future does not come cheap, quick or easy. The triple pandemic (Climate/Health, Economy and Racism) will require our nation's collective political will and muscle and large investments.

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FEDERAL LEGISLATION:

Legislation to advance an equity-centered 100% clean economy involves transformating the energy, food and water infrastructure to be climate resilient, high road labor and community standards, democratic and address the structural impediments to connect disadvantaged community to jobs and business opportunities includes:

1. Large-scale clean economy investments is a pre-requisite to: a) radically transform the major sectors of the economy to be climate resilient and to b) scale the climate economy to ensure a just transition for existing workers and to c) include historically underrepresented populations. Funding for local multi-stakeholder climate economic recovery plans

2. Flexible-block grant funding to develop and implement multi-stakeholder climate economic resilience plans

3. 1% of clean economy investment allocated to support high road workforce and minority business development.

4. Federal guidelines and incentives to diversify unions and to increase supplier diversity, through appropriate procurement, capacity and capitalizations.

5. Investment capital to fund community-driven and owned energy, food and water projects.

6. Enact national legislation at the federal level similar to the Farmer Equity Act that was passed in CA back in 2017 - see attached report on the implementation plan by the CDFA. USDA and state depts of ag need to make a strong commitment to supporting increased equity in agriculture - opportunities for funding, land tenure, contracting,

7. Continued support for the organic standard and an additional standard for "transition-to-organic", which helps producers who are in the process of transitioning from conventional to organic receive support for the costs of changing their production practices (can take 3-5 yrs) and get a fair, higher price for their healthier food products;

8. Improve access to clean, safe drinking water by addressing harmful contamination

9. Increase resources for water infrastructure and climate resiliency projects in underserved communities;

10. Help disadvantaged communities navigate the funding process and increase the availability of direct grants to ensure communities are no longer overlooked or disregarded

REFERENCES

Energy Sector Reference:

Energy Democracy Scorecard

Food Sector References:
Anchors in Resilient Communities (ARC) –
Anchors in Resilient Communities (ARC) Regional food system project. Value chain assessment
Anchors in Resilient Communities (ARC) Workforce Assessment
Alameda County Circular Economy for Food. A Pathway for Growth prepared by Mary Ruth Belsey Priebe for Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan (District 3) July 2020.

Water Reference:
The major issues and positions are articulated by the national Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus:
https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/WhctKJVzfQGbLzZHNVSkwLtsdQCtKkZrzXPWFhSMHWCTjnvpTDNxChBWnwdDTWkDTGjKWFV?projector=1&messagePartId=0.5