

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change
Hearing on “Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Pathways to Net Zero Industrial Emissions”
September 18, 2019

Combating climate change is a top priority of this Committee. That is why, in July, I joined Chairmen Tonko and Rush, and other Committee Democrats, in announcing a bold plan to address the climate crisis by achieving a 100 percent clean economy by 2050.

Recent reports by U.S. scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change paint a grim picture of our future if we do not get carbon pollution under control. We are already experiencing record heat waves, flooding, sea level rise, intense wildfires, extended drought and severe weather events that experts projected would come with increased warming. These events are taking a terrible toll on our communities, and the cost of inaction is growing.

We must act, and our 100 by 50 plan is supported by scientific consensus. Scientists say we must limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

Transforming our economy to one that is 100 percent clean will be tough and will take significant resources and ingenuity, but it is absolutely necessary. Some sectors of the economy will be more difficult to address than others.

Today’s hearing will examine the industrial sector – an essential sector of our economy and one with some of the largest challenges as we look to transition to a 100 percent clean economy.

The industrial sector is a source of good-paying jobs and critical products. These products make up our infrastructure and are essential to a wide array of businesses and services in our modern society. A vibrant manufacturing sector helps our economy flourish. At the same time, this sector is also the third largest source of all greenhouse gas pollution.

Compared to other sectors of the economy, emissions from the industrial sector come from a diverse mix of heat production, power generation and chemical reactions. That mix also varies widely across individual subsectors and facilities – from manufacturing cement and steel to producing chemicals and paper products. This diversity makes the industrial sector especially challenging to decarbonize.

There is no single policy that will curb carbon pollution from the entire sector. Switching to renewables and electrification will work in some areas, but not others. Capturing and storing emissions – rather than eliminating them altogether – will likely be the most effective way to decarbonize certain parts of the industrial sector, since creating certain materials naturally produces carbon.

Transitioning the industrial sector to a clean future is challenging, but certainly possible. Pathways to industrial sector decarbonization do exist. We have many technologies available today that, with wider deployment, can improve material and energy efficiency in manufacturing, and lower carbon and other harmful pollutants. We also need continued research, design development, and demonstration projects to lower costs and spur technological innovation.

Comprehensive climate action provides an opportunity to transform our economy for the future. The technologies we develop and demonstrate here in the United States can be exported to other nations, creating new businesses and millions of good jobs in a climate-resilient economy. Climate action ensures our nation does not fall behind our global economic competitors, but, instead, leads the world.

The rest of the world is already taking the climate threat seriously, embarking on a major transition into a low-carbon economy. We can either lead that transition or watch as American workers and industries get left behind. Cleaning up the industrial sector is essential to meeting this challenge.

I am committed to the 100 by 50 target and to building widely-supported solutions that make the necessary pollution reductions while also strengthening our economy for the future.

America has always been a leader in innovation. We can and must use our talent and resources to grow new, clean industries here at home and employ our workers to deliver low or zero-carbon, high quality products to the world.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today as we continue to hear ideas about how best to reach our 100 by 50 target.