

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Driving Affordability: Preserving People’s Freedom to Buy Affordable Vehicles and Fuel.”

June 22, 2023

Today we are once again witnessing Republicans picking winners and losers in our nation’s transportation sector to put polluters over people. With the bills before the Subcommittee, Republicans are actively fighting against innovation, lower energy bills for Americans, and the auto industry’s ability to make manufacturing decisions based on what consumers want. Committee Republicans’ efforts to continue propping up Big Oil corporations threatens a clean and prosperous future for all Americans.

I reject this approach and am instead committed to clean vehicle affordability and consumer choice. And that’s exactly what Democrats delivered last Congress – real solutions for our transportation sector.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invested \$7.5 billion in EV charging, \$10 billion in clean transportation, and over \$7 billion in EV battery components, including critical minerals which have increasingly been manufactured overseas. These investments will help build the EV infrastructure needed across the nation.

The Inflation Reduction Act included rebates and tax credits to lower the cost of EVs for American families, including a tax credit up to \$4,000 for a qualifying preowned or used EV. Electric vehicles are becoming more and more popular every day, and these tax credits are making them even more affordable for American families. And yet, every Republican here today voted against both of these laws and all of these critical investments.

Instead, they are deliberately misleading Americans about EVs and EPA proposals in order to do the bidding of Big Oil corporations. The truth is EPA is not imposing any sort of EV mandate. It’s also true that EVs provide significant public health and environmental benefits and deliver significant savings to Americans by decreasing fuel costs by 50 percent. They are also overall 25 percent less expensive to own than regular cars. As a result of these benefits, demand for EVs is already exceedingly outpacing supply.

Unfortunately, the four bills Republicans included in this hearing will move us backwards in cleaning up and modernizing the transportation sector. My Republican colleagues oppose EVs so much that they are trying to legislate away decades of innovation in cleaner transportation, are working against market trends, and will strip EPA of its authority to protect Americans from vehicle pollution. And they are doing all of this to protect large corporations while refusing to invest in American families.

H.R. 1435 flies in the face of 50 years of Congress and EPA recognizing California's authority to set more protective vehicle standards. It infringes on states' ability to voluntarily adopt those standards to protect their citizens from dangerous pollution and climate change. This bill is not just a direct attack on California, but also on the dozens of other states – including New Jersey – that frequently follow California's lead.

A discussion draft would block EPA from finalizing its proposed light- and medium-duty vehicle emission standards. As drafted, it could also prevent EPA from ever finalizing new vehicle standards, hamstringing the agency's ability to fulfill its obligation to protect Americans from dangerous motor vehicle pollution.

Another discussion draft, the "No Fuel Credits for Batteries Act," would bar EPA from allowing credits to be generated under the Renewable Fuel Standard for renewable electricity for transportation fuel – also known as eRINs. EPA has been working in this area since 2010, as directed by Congress. The renewable electricity for eRINs would be produced by a variety of renewable biogas feedstocks, such as landfills, farmers, municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and others. This legislation would stifle biofuel production opportunities across the country.

Finally, I have concerns with H.R. 3337, which would allow corn starch ethanol to qualify as an advanced biofuel under the Renewable Fuel Standard. It would force EPA to rely solely on the Department of Energy's GREET model for determining lifecycle emissions for biomass-based diesel and corn starch ethanol. Picking winners and losers within the biofuels market under the RFS makes no sense. As drafted, the bill also weakens EPA's ability to administer the RFS responsibly and would replace science-based decision-making with political preference.

If House Republicans are really interested in driving affordability, they should join us in supporting policies that will continue to promote innovation in our clean transportation sector, not undermine it. I invite them to join us in our efforts to lower energy costs for Americans, protect public health, address the worsening climate crisis, and grow our economy for the future. Unfortunately, the bills before us today are a step in the wrong direction.

I yield back the remainder of my time.