

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “Maximizing Opportunities for Redeveloping Brownfields Sites: Assessing the Potential for New American Innovation”

March 11, 2025

Today we are discussing the Environmental Protection Agency’s Brownfields Program, which continues to be a shining example of how government can protect the public health of our communities while also stimulating economic growth.

In 2002, I partnered with the late Representative Paul Gillmor of Ohio, who Chaired this Subcommittee at the time, to write the Brownfields law. Over the last 20 years, the Brownfields Program has consistently enjoyed bipartisan support and has been an economic engine for local government and communities looking to turn former contaminated sites into economic centers and green spaces. Every Congressional district is home to at least one of these sites.

As part of the program, the federal government provides financial help in the form of grants or loans for cleanup, assessments, and job training so communities can turn impacted sites into parks, public housing, or new business centers. Since its inception, more than 40,000 sites have been revitalized and made ready for development around the nation. These revitalization projects leveraged nearly 280,000 jobs and more than \$41 billion in economic development.

This funding has been a lifeline for communities, and with the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021 we were able to inject an additional \$1.5 billion into the Brownfields Program, increasing annual awards by nearly 400 percent to around \$240 million. Through these funds – communities are growing their economies for the future and creating good-paying jobs.

The Brownfields Program also benefits public health and safety by reducing contamination in communities that couldn’t afford to repurpose contaminated sites on their own. And that’s just the beginning. For every dollar the federal government invests in the Brownfields Program, we get more than 20 dollars back in economic return, showcasing the win-win scenario that the program facilitates.

It’s important that we keep all of these benefits in mind as we look to reauthorize the program before funding runs out in Fiscal Year 2026. We must reauthorize and fund the program to continue its critical mission. I believe that starting these bipartisan conversations early is a necessary first step. I hope we can all agree that this program is more than worth of every dollar we put into it, and that we can work together to provide robust funding moving forward.

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But what makes today's hearing unique is the chaotic circumstances in which we find ourselves. The Trump Administration, perpetuated by Elon Musk and DOGE, has continued to recklessly and illegally cut staff at federal agencies -- including those that administer the Brownfields Program at the EPA's Office of Land & Emergency Management. These illegal funding freezes have directly impacted the Brownfields Program, delaying projects and causing confusion among grant recipients who are responsible for cleaning up these sites.

The Brownfields Program protects our communities and revitalizes our local economies, and we owe it to all of our constituents to figure out a path forward, ensuring funding is delivered. And it is crucial that any discussion of the future of the Brownfields Program builds on the program's economic and community success, while recognizing the need for dedicated federal staff to administer it.

Thank you and I yield back.