

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Environment Ranking Member Paul Tonko

Hearing on “Trash to Treasure: Examining Legislation to Support Domestic Critical Mineral Recovery and Recycling”

June 24, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Today, the Subcommittee will examine seven bills and discussion drafts seeking to enhance our national capacity to recover and utilize alternative sources of critical minerals.

While I do have serious concerns about a couple of these bills, including any codification of President Trump’s Executive Orders, I also believe several of these proposals warrant our further attention.

Democrats on this Subcommittee have long recognized the potential of resource recovery and recycling to contribute to meeting our national critical mineral needs. Recycling can provide significant percentages of expected demand of key minerals needed for battery production, including lithium, cobalt, and nickel.

This would provide us with a new, untapped domestic supply, not only reducing our current overreliance on foreign sources, but also creating more sustainable supply chains by alleviating some of the need for riskier environmental extractions.

With that said, I recognize that turning a battery into its raw materials and then back into a battery is not an easy process. Batteries, when not properly handled or disposed of, do present some risks to workers, nearby communities, and our environment. We know that has been the case with lead-acid batteries, and it will remain true of lithium-ion batteries.

So, while I am open to understanding better some of the regulatory barriers that are making it more difficult to add greater long-term circularity to our critical mineral supply chains, I do not believe this should come at the expense of fundamental environmental and worker protections.

And I hope we can begin to figure out that balance today.

While the drafts under consideration today warrant discussions, I believe Congress can play a constructive role in moving us even further towards our shared goal of secure, domestic critical mineral supply chains.

Our environmental and safety regulations need not only be seen as a barrier to achieving our goals.

States are already proving that smart regulations can push all stakeholders— from manufacturers to recyclers to individual consumers— to being part of the solution.

And I would again suggest that responsible end-of-life management of batteries through a national product stewardship program, like Extended Producer Responsibility, can be an important step. Because once we have gone through the trouble of importing critical materials, sensible collection, reuse, and recycling requirements, can ensure that those materials are recovered.

That is how we can build for long-term, sustainable management of our critical mineral supply chains. And this type of more comprehensive approach to responsible end-of-life management of batteries is not only possible, but preferable.

It would guarantee valuable minerals are kept out of landfills, while also mitigating fire risks and enabling the repurposing of batteries whenever possible.

I have been encouraged by the work happening at EPA under both the Biden and Trump Administrations to examine this challenge. I hope we can learn from that effort and determine what additional action from Congress may be necessary.

Finally, while I have mostly focused on batteries this morning, I am also encouraged by the Environmental Monitoring and Remediation Technology Assessment Initiative.

If we can find opportunities for mineral recovery and legacy environmental remediation to work hand-in-hand, it could be a true win-win situation.

We must be careful not to create loopholes in the law, to exacerbate environmental harms at these sites, but exploring how EPA can support emerging remediation technologies has potential. And that work could be further expanded to support other valuable environmentally beneficial products such as the mineralization of carbon dioxide.

Again, I want to thank the Chairman for today's discussion. There are some good opportunities to strengthen our domestic critical mineral supply if we are able to unlock that potential while maintaining appropriate environmental safeguards.

Thank you. I yield back.