

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee Ranking Member Paul Tonko**

Markup of 7 Bills, Subcommittee on Environment

December 10, 2025

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have heard over and over again, from Members on both sides of the aisle, how effective the Clean Air Act has been at reducing pollution and protecting Americans. Without a doubt, the law has been incredibly successful. It is arguably the most effective public health law in our nation's history.

But despite decades of progress, millions of Americans still live in areas determined to have unhealthy air quality. And rather than allowing the law to continue working—to help bring relief to Americans still experiencing unsafe levels of air pollution—the Republicans' position, as evident by the bills included in today's markup, is to declare the job done and start eroding the progress that has been made over the past five decades.

This should not come as a surprise. Republicans on this committee, under the leadership of several different Committee and Subcommittee Chairs, have been trying and failing to enact versions of the proposals before us for many years.

These bills do not represent new and innovative solutions specifically tailored to meet our current policy challenges. They are the same tired ideas that suggest Americans should expect to live with unsafe air quality if the rules necessary to protect them would cut into polluters' profits. But Congress doesn't legislate in a vacuum, so I think it is important to add some context to today's proceedings.

First, since January 20th, the Trump Administration has been on a crusade to gut the Environmental Protection Agency, rollback previously finalized National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and exempt favored industries from hazardous air pollutant rules. The Trump Administration is making EPA a toxic workplace for the people responsible for conducting and analyzing the science necessary to inform the regulatory process.

That science is so essential, especially because as we generate more robust and precise scientific evidence, our understanding of the health effects of air pollution becomes more clear. And it is almost always worse than we previously thought. This is why the National Ambient Air Quality Standards are so important.

The standard setting process requires regular reviews and updates to ensure public health is adequately protected based on the latest science. But the bills today would undermine the NAAQS process, which has proven to be so successful.

Several of the bills would make it more difficult for EPA to strengthen standards in the future, even if the scientific evidence would warrant it. Other bills would make it easier for polluters to cut corners and avoid compliance, which is great for their bottom lines but not so good for the people who live and work near these facilities.

Gutting the EPA and its workforce, and carrying out a massive deregulatory agenda will have consequences. And to complement the Trump Administration's efforts to reduce agency capacity, these proposed bills would drastically limit its legal authorities.

Ultimately, if these bills are enacted, it will be more difficult for EPA to protect Americans from environmental health threats and enforce the rules against polluters, even beyond this current Administration.

The second important piece of context is that earlier this year Congressional Republicans and President Trump enacted a partisan budget reconciliation bill that will result in millions of Americans losing their healthcare.

Millions more are feeling the effects of significant premium increases, and House Republicans have no plan to address the expiration of the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits. At a time when so many Americans are losing access to healthcare, the proposals we will consider today add insult to injury.

These bills will make it more likely that Americans will get sick and need to see a doctor or visit an emergency room. Republicans' policy preferences are pushing us towards a future where hospitals, already under financial pressure, will have to deal with more cases of asthma, COPD, and other health consequences of increased air pollution affecting millions of uninsured Americans.

The Clean Air Act has a 50-year track record of success, driving innovation in pollution control technologies and enabling the cost-effective reduction of pollution. It has worked as intended, and it continues to protect Americans' health while enabling economic growth.

The legislation we will consider today represents serious threats to both past and future progress, so I must oppose each of them.

With that, I yield back.