

Committee on Energy and Commerce

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

Hearing on “Corrosion, Collapse, and Clean-Up: Examining the Potomac Interceptor Collapse”

May 20, 2026

The January collapse of a segment of the Potomac Interceptor led to hundreds of millions of gallons of wastewater flowing into the Potomac River. While the collapse did not threaten the Capital’s drinking water supply, this is yet another reminder of our nation’s aging infrastructure and the risks of failing to address it. This hearing is an opportunity for us to examine what happened here and how we can work to prevent and address infrastructure failures across the country.

The Potomac Interceptor collapse received lots of attention due to its size and proximity to the nation’s capital, but many of our nation’s towns and cities continue to experience similar issues as infrastructure ages. Decades of underinvestment in our water systems have created a vicious cycle that plays out beneath our feet and out of sight. The reality is that addressing aging infrastructure requires resources and attention that it does not always receive.

The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) most recent needs assessments found a massive shortfall. Water utilities need more than \$150 billion just to repair aging pipe systems like the Potomac Interceptor that transport sewage to waste treatment facilities.

I ask unanimous consent to enter in the record the President’s 2027 budget request for EPA and EPA’s most recent Clean Watersheds and Drinking Water Needs Surveys.

Despite these clear needs, just last month, we watched Republicans on this Committee nod along as EPA Administrator Zeldin argued for the massive cuts to water infrastructure funding included in Trump’s 2027 budget request. That budget request calls for an 86 percent cut to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund — which helps water systems access low-cost financing for needed upgrades like replacing lead service lines and upgrading treatment technology.

Trump’s budget calls for an even larger 90 percent cut to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which provides essential support for wastewater and stormwater projects that protect public health. Overall, the President’s budget requests a 67 percent cut to EPA’s Office of Water, meaning water infrastructure would receive less funding, and communities will continue to grapple with aging infrastructure and contaminants.

America’s water systems are struggling, and Trump’s budget proposals would only make that worse. EPA did good work in helping to address the serious issues created by the Potomac

May 20, 2026

Page 2

Interceptor collapse, but an effective emergency response does nothing to prevent future incidents. Unfortunately, massive cuts to EPA programs that help prevent water infrastructure from failing would almost guarantee a future with more emergencies where EPA simply lurches from one preventable water crisis to the next.

Trump has made crystal clear what his priorities are. While Americans struggle to make ends meet, Republicans are planning to give \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars to Trump for the White House ballroom that he touted would be privately funded. When Trump was asked how the economic toll on Americans weighs on him, he responded, "I don't think about Americans' financial situation."

His reckless war of choice against Iran has now racked up about \$30 billion in direct costs and countless more in damage to our economy and expense to Americans at the grocery store and the gas pump. And now, the Trump Administration has created a \$1.8 billion slush fund to pay off Trump's friends and followers, potentially including those who stormed the Capitol and assaulted Capitol Police Officers.

Trump has proven time and time again that his priorities are not in the best interest of the American people. Rather than gutting our water infrastructure programs, we should be investing in them so that incidents like the Potomac Interceptor collapse are less common than they already are. But that is not what is happening with this President and this Administration. They simply don't care about infrastructure, or about the public's financial situation. It's unfortunate, but hopefully we can change that.

And with that I yield back the balance of my time.