



**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Creating a Climate Resilient America: Strengthening the U.S. Financial  
System and Expanding Economic Opportunity”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
October 1st, 2020**

*As prepared for delivery*

Whether it’s extreme heat, intense flooding, stronger storms, or relentless wildfires, the climate crisis continues to pose a severe threat to America’s economy and the pocketbooks of all Americans. Year after year, we’ve seen how climate change hurts businesses, strains resources across the nation, and harms workers. And we’ve seen the impact it has on the budgets of local governments, who don’t always have the resources to recover from worsening disasters – and on the budget of the U.S. government, as we are forced to provide greater amounts of disaster aid in the wake of calamity.

The risks and harms of climate change are hurting families, farmers, and small business owners, as well as workers in manufacturing and the energy sector. The changing climate is especially harming working-class households and people of color – the same folks who have been historically marginalized through discriminatory practices and underinvestment.

It’s also putting our financial institutions at risk. Just last month, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission issued a landmark report, describing these dangers and giving lawmakers and financial regulators actionable recommendations on how to mitigate the growing risks. Climate change is affecting insurance markets and making lending costlier. It’s making it harder for frontline communities to afford the protection and peace of mind they deserve. And it’s hurting our farmers and agricultural workers.

The writing is on the wall. Financial markets, federal regulators, and business leaders recognize the risks posed by climate change, but they’re also publicly optimistic about the opportunities to solve the climate crisis - by directing capital toward climate-smart investments and making our economy more resilient and stronger than ever. Just today, 55 international financial intuitions, including U.S.-based MetLife and the Amalgamated Bank, released a framework for setting specific climate goals for mortgages, bonds and other asset classes in their portfolios.

Our workers, our financial institutions, and our small businesses are looking to Congress for solutions. So, as we find ways to bounce back from the harm done by COVID-19, we must build back our economy so that it’s better and stronger than ever. And it starts by investing in long-term solutions – lasting solutions that will protect workers, strengthen our financial systems, and ensure economic growth.

Those solutions are climate solutions. Investing in a resilient clean energy economy will put Americans back to work through millions of good-paying, life-sustaining jobs. It will strengthen

our middle class and provide justice for Black and Brown Americans. And it will make our financial institutions stronger and more resilient to growing climate impacts.

By bringing transparency to climate-related risks, we'll be able to build a 21st-century economy that withstands the test of time. Climate solutions give us a chance to rebuild our economy and our infrastructure, making them stronger, more resilient, and more grounded in environmental justice. We can create the jobs of the future at a time when our nation desperately needs them – but we need to act with urgency and unite behind the science.

States and local communities are already leading the way. For example, California has created a special task force on climate risk and insurance, while cities in my own state of Florida have formed regional climate compacts to pool together resources and knowledge. And along the Mississippi River, communities have come together to address flood and drought risks that threaten farmers, finding innovative solutions in collaboration with insurers, catastrophe risk modelers, and investors.

Now Congress must step up and lead.

We must enact policies that give communities the tools and resources they need to become resilient and mitigate climate risks. We must ensure their access to climate data, so they can make informed decisions about how to sustain their local economies and build lasting growth. And we must help them overcome barriers to private investment in climate resilience and protect investors from hidden sources of climate risks.

The science is in. The risks are clear. And the incredible opportunities for progress are within our reach. It's up to us what to do next.