U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Opening Statement

Chairwoman Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ)
of the Subcommittee on Environment

Joint Research & Technology and Environment Subcommittee Hearing:
Assessing Federal Programs for Measuring Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks

June 23, 2022

Good morning, everyone. I am pleased to welcome you, alongside Chairwoman Stevens, to today's joint subcommittee hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for joining us today to provide their expertise on programs at their agencies responsible for measuring greenhouse gas emissions and sinks. I'm looking forward to your testimonies.

Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases, trap heat within the Earth's atmosphere causing our planet to become warmer. These greenhouse gases can be emitted naturally and through human activities. The scientific consensus points to the increasing emissions of anthropogenic greenhouse gases as the leading cause of climate change. We have often talked on this Committee how communities across the nation are already experiencing the effects of climate change through record rainfall amounts, bigger wildfires, longer droughts, and rising sea levels.

Every day, many Americans take individual action towards curbing their excess greenhouse gas emissions. This includes but is not limited to, buying electric vehicles, using public transportation, and purchasing carbon offsets. Governments at all levels are also supporting these efforts through developing energy efficiency standards and the rapid deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. This shift in our behavior is spurring the growth of the economy through the development of new markets and the competitiveness of those markets, as well as through innovation. Reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions will not only create a healthier environment for all communities but will also encourage economic growth.

My home state of New Jersey has set an ambitious but achievable goal of 50 percent reduction of the state's greenhouse gas emissions by the end of this decade, and an 80 percent reduction by 2050. New Jersey also releases a comprehensive statewide greenhouse gas emissions inventory report every two years. This report is consistent with national and international standards for inventory practices. Other states and local communities publish similar reports to track their efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. While these efforts are imperative to monitor our greenhouse gas emissions, and reductions, the New York Times reported last year that cities across the nation are under reporting their emissions by nearly 20 percent. Accurate emissions data is essential to understanding where our communities currently stand and how the mitigation efforts are progressing.

That is what brings us here today. While we are working to curb excess greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the impacts of climate change and protect public health, we do not know exactly how much we are emitting and if our efforts to reduce these emissions are effective. The federal science agencies that we are fortunate to hear from today are some of the leaders in cutting-edge research to accurately track greenhouse gas emissions globally and domestically. To address this challenge immediately, we need to understand the current state of observation, measurement, and verification processes of the sources and sinks of greenhouse gases, and how to improve those processes. We also need to address any challenges there may be in monitoring or collecting this valuable data.

Achieving our emissions reduction goals and meeting our commitment to the Paris Agreement requires accurate accounting of the sources and sinks of greenhouse gas emissions. We cannot mitigate what we cannot measure. The U.S. can continue to lead the world in advancing research and technology innovation to help tackle this global issue.

I look forward to the witnesses' testimony today on the ongoing federal efforts on the measurements of greenhouse gas emission data, as well as any recommendations to the Committee on how we can address research gaps related to this important issue. Thank you again for being here. I yield back.