



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Energy Subcommittee Hearing:
Fostering Equity in Energy Innovation
July 16th, 2021

Good morning and thank you Chairman Bowman and Ranking Member Weber for convening this excellent panel of witnesses to discuss the critical importance of developing equitable energy solutions. As clean energy technologies become an ever-growing component of our global energy economy, the social impacts of these technologies and the policies that support them are becoming increasingly salient. We must work to ensure that the transition to a clean energy economy does not create communities of winners and losers, because every community is vital to our country's energy future.

This Committee understands that it is essential for us to transition to low-carbon energy systems as quickly as possible to mitigate the impacts of climate change. However, we must also guarantee that these systems are fairer, inclusive, and just. Instead of defining the global climate problem narrowly as simply mitigating carbon emissions, the problem should be expanded to embrace an equity approach to creating energy solutions that will address the many systemic barriers to energy security. We will not succeed in our commitment to a clean and just energy future if we only prioritize environmental and economic outcomes at the expense of social sustainability.

Granted, this problem isn't new. Marginalized communities have historically carried a disproportionate share of the energy and environmental burden, while rarely receiving any of the economic benefits. Researchers find these communities have not been considered or included in past clean energy planning and policymaking. Consequently, many of the same people who would benefit most from such initiatives are overlooked when policies are developed, implemented, and evaluated. And low-income households, communities of color, older adults, and renters all face disproportionately high energy burdens, meaning they spend more of their income on energy bills compared to their counterparts.

These disparities are concerning, and I believe as this Committee continues to shape clean energy policy, we must ensure that the technologies of the future do not overshadow the energy priorities of frontline communities. One of the first actions we can take is to support the early integration of social sciences in energy research and development. This will hopefully aid in eliminating bias and provide a better understanding of non-economic barriers that may negatively impact technology adoption.

It is also imperative that we meaningfully engage with historically marginalized communities to create pathways for community-driven energy solutions that incorporate social issues. I sincerely believe that our success as a nation in addressing our climate challenge will require diverse voices to be heard as we strive for a green and just energy transition. In closing, I want to thank our panel for joining us today and I look forward to this discussion.