



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Emilia Sykes (D-OH)

Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight Hearing:

Justice for Whom? Examining the Justice40 Initiative's Oversight and Implementation

June 26, 2025

Thank you, Chairman McCormick, and thank you to our witnesses for appearing today.

This is a moment of profound upheaval for science in the United States. The entire post-World War II architecture that has powered America's global leadership in scientific research for 80 years is under siege by the Trump Administration.

Robust government support for basic science; close federal partnerships with research universities; rigorous merit-based review processes to fund the most deserving research ideas; and so much more are all in jeopardy. If any topic demands oversight by the Science Committee, surely it is this: the ongoing ideological assault by President Trump and DOGE on the very foundations of American science and innovation.

But that is not a reality my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have any interest in acknowledging. Perhaps because they cannot defend it, and they are more comfortable looking backwards than grappling with the disturbing facts of the present – and their implications for the future.

So instead, we are here today to discuss the Justice40 Initiative, an effort that was ended on day one of the Trump Administration. At its core, Justice40 was an effort to finally ensure that the benefits of federal spending would be distributed fairly and efficiently across the United States.

We've been hearing a lot about government inefficiency recently. I think that this is a fair critique – government funding can be like peanut butter; you don't want to spread it so thinly that it doesn't make a difference. I saw this in my experience as a public health professional. I have been proud to advance efforts that protect moms and babies. Infant mortality is still tragically too high.

However, we know some of the things that are associated with it, like communities with lead pipes and without access to healthcare. Although the United States continues to show overall improvements in infant mortality, women of color and their children also bear a disproportionate burden of infant deaths. Even in low-risk mothers, children born to Black

women are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday than are children born to white women.

Knowing all of that, does spreading money evenly to every hospital or birthing center seem like an efficient way to combat infant mortality? It doesn't seem like it to me. Instead, we should target our resources where they'll have the largest impact.

Justice40 took a similar approach to making historic investments in climate, clean energy and infrastructure. The initiative aimed to incorporate environmental justice into those programs and spread the benefits of those investments to the communities that needed them most, including communities that were historically disadvantaged and ignored by previous federal spending programs.

Justice40 was an ambitious, all-hands-on-deck plan that sought to develop new tools, new processes, and new community engagement mechanisms to make sure that every community, no matter where it was located or who lived there, had a fair shot to access federal funding. The values of Justice40 were the basic values of fairness, equality, and respect that lie at the heart of environmental justice. And despite the end of Justice40, they are values that will endure, regardless of the current political moment.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Trump Administration is waging a scorched earth campaign to purge every trace of environmental justice from the federal government. What's more, eliminating initiatives like Justice40 before they can be properly and fully implemented doesn't just make them less efficient – it defeats the purpose of ever endeavoring to affect change through policy.

That is a tragedy. But it leaves those of us who support these values with even more of an obligation to advocate for historically disadvantaged communities and fight for their ability to get a fair shake. To that end, I'm very pleased to welcome Dr. Michael Gelobter to this hearing. Dr. Gelobter is the Executive Director of the Yale Center for Environmental Justice, and a national leader in understanding the interplay between climate change, clean energy, and environmental justice. Dr. Gelobter's expertise is exactly what this hearing needs to help us assess the achievements of the Justice40 Initiative, as well as how far we still must go. I am grateful for his willingness to testify.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.