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Chairman Schatz and members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today, thank you for the invitation.

My name is Justin Farrell and I am a sociology professor at Yale University, where I research, write, and teach in our School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

My research uses rigorous scientific methods to examine corporate and political influences on climate change. I also study how these dynamics affect rural communities, especially in my native state of Wyoming and across the West.

I was invited to speak to you today about the growing – and now very well established – body of research on climate change disinformation and denial in the United States.

Thirty years ago, Republican George H.W. Bush expressed confidently, “We will talk about global warming...And we will act.” Public opinion reflected these concerns, for Republicans and Democrats alike.

Yet, in a short time we witnessed the utter collapse of this bipartisan agreement and appetite for action.

But why, and how, had this critical planetary issue become so politicized?

This striking puzzle caught the eye of some social scientists, especially ones who study the influence of what we now call “dark money.”

In recent years, this line of research has grown in scale and sophistication. As such, there is a diverse body of research from sociology, history, law, and political science that provides strong empirical evidence of a well-funded and well-coordinated movement – over 30 years time – intended to deceive the American people and thwart the political process.

By any reliable measure, this political movement has been – and still is – immensely successful, sowing seeds of widespread popular doubt, transforming climate change into a sharply politicized issue, infusing climate denial into the highest levels of government, and obstructing policy solutions that are sorely needed to decarbonize our economy and mitigate the impacts of warming.

These are not simply my opinions, political or otherwise. They are based on data and facts. And not just by me, but by many, many expert researchers. Our work is subject to rigorous historical and scientific standards. Our work has been scrutinized through the peer-review process and published in the best scientific journals in the world.

A wide range of scholars – often from public universities in red and purple states – have been at the forefront of this research, including institutions such as Oklahoma State, Michigan State, Ohio State, George Mason University, the University of Colorado, Penn State, just to name a few.

I want to briefly highlight a few main findings from this field of research:

First, research shows that fossil fuel funding launched a multi-pronged manipulation effort

Tens of millions of dollars (likely much, much more) were given to think tanks and other organizations willing to align themselves with the fossil fuel strategy of promoting false and misleading information.

Research also shows that funding was allocated to *create* fake "grassroots" organizations – or front groups – staffed with fake experts, again with the intent of promoting doubt about CO₂ and increasing global temperatures.

Further, fossil fuel corporations and trade associations hired some of the best PR firms to test, tailor and target messaging they knew would be effective in manipulating public opinion related to climate change. As experts in rhetorical manipulation, these public relations firms are a major actor in the broader public deception campaign.

This huge effort was effective – and is *still* effective – because money facilitated coordination between nearly two hundred organizations, including many corporations, advocacy groups, media outlets, PR firms, trade associations, and philanthropic foundations.

These financed efforts created the appearance of scientific credibility – so when the average American citizen turned on cable news, listened to talk radio, or read the morning newspaper, they could not tell the difference between fossil fuel propaganda and trusted science.

Second, research shows that fossil fuel funding aimed to concentrate power among a handful of well-coordinated organizations:

Not all of the organizations in this denial effort are as successful as others. Levels of influence are often predicted by ties to the most powerful fossil fuel actors, especially ExxonMobil and the Koch network.

Third, and in conclusion, while researchers have learned a great deal about these dynamics, we are severely limited by untraceable funding and inaccessible information:

Specifically, the rise of untraceable donor-directed philanthropy – such as DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund – has made it very difficult for researchers to continue their work.

One can certainly infer about these things, yet conjecture is not what we do as scholars. Data is our lifeblood, and yet private philanthropic and industry funding continues to be kept in the dark.

Not only will better transparency improve our research, but it may also help to thwart large-scale manipulation campaigns before they begin, or after they have already taken root.

Thank you.