



CITY OF PITTSBURGH

Office of Mayor William Peduto

Testimony to the Special Committee on the Climate Crisis, July 17, 2019

By William Peduto, Mayor, City of Pittsburgh

Good morning, my name is William Peduto, and I am the 60th Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh. Thank you for inviting me to speak today with my esteemed colleagues from Atlanta, Honolulu, Saint Paul and Portland on the deepening climate crisis affecting all of us in this room, and every other person on our planet.

As government servants, all of us have sworn an oath to help provide for the health, safety and welfare of our residents. And addressing the issues of climate change is just good government: leaving politics aside, it all comes down to an effort to save money, help the vulnerable, and make our communities healthier places to live, for everyone.

Unfortunately that has not been the case. Given the leadership void left by inaction by federal and state governments, solving these challenges has been left largely to cities like ours, and we must continue to innovate and lead as we take on this crisis.

In Pittsburgh we are pursuing two plans: the Pittsburgh Climate Action Plan and the ONEPGH Resilience Strategy. Concurrent planning of climate and resilience, while challenging, has allowed us to simultaneously review the shocks and stressors facing us in the short and long terms within the context of climate mitigation planning. Our process, which consisted of numerous community engagements and enlistment of subject matter experts from our community, universities and industries, has allowed us to create better alignments among not just the environmental aspects of climate change, but the economic and social ones as well. As part of this effort, we have joined a global effort of cities and local governments, private sector and philanthropic partners to respond to our changing climate.

The 55 square miles of the City of Pittsburgh contribute roughly 4 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. Almost 80% of these emissions come from the heating and electricity of buildings, 19% from transportation systems and roughly 1% from waste systems.

Using this data, Pittsburgh created its 100/50/0 emissions reduction goals, which equate to the consumption of 100% renewable electricity for city operations (with the vision of city wide zero emissions electrical power); 100% fossil fuel free fleet; 50% emissions reduction; and zero waste. These goals serve as a guidepost for operations and targets that we seek to attain by 2030.

Our ongoing work has taught us several things.

The confluence of climate and equity are the greatest challenges of our time, but bring with them great opportunity. By joining these issues together we can create co-benefits that will create jobs, improve the health of our society, and improve our environment.

Cities are central to the cause of addressing the issue of climate change. Seventy percent of emissions are generated in cities. Concurrently, cities face the greatest amount of catastrophic risk associated with weather born events. We cannot equivocate on debating the facts: the lack of attention from the White House and Congress is causing us as a country to lose ground in the spaces of innovation, economic opportunity and technological advancement. However, cities are filling this void and continuing to invest in solutions, using American ingenuity.

Risk and exposure have not been fully calculated. As we have come to better understand our climate exposure in Pittsburgh, we know firsthand the impacts of disinvestment in aging infrastructure, and the absence of federal partnerships and capital investment. Flood risk, extreme weather patterns and swings in heat and freezing cycles are increasing the costs of energy on our residents and businesses, while endangering long standing businesses like agriculture and tourism. Insurance rates are rising and commercial buildings and municipal infrastructure is not built to withstand these new, more frequent weather challenges.

We need to adapt to climate challenges and mitigation of climate causing pollutants. Cities need the resources to plan and prepare for a new set of risks. Recently, my Sustainability Team completed an analysis with Siemens that demonstrates a pathway for creating a just energy transition that puts investment in our aging transportation networks, upgrades our buildings to be more energy efficient; and leverages clean and renewable power systems.

We can improve our local air quality, reduce pollution and create jobs. Our work with Siemens shows that investment in clean power systems like solar, wind and nuclear – paired with upgrading traffic systems and old buildings to be better consumers of energy – is a model that can be replicated in every city across the country.

This can be accomplished through a “Marshall Plan for the Midwest.” We need to call upon the cities and towns that built America to rebuild America. That helps every community, urban and rural, to invest in ourselves by creating a cleaner, more sustainable economy; to create a transition that allows all to share in the prosperity that can be created by jointly addressing the challenges of climate and inequality; to rebuild an America that uses wind turbines with America steel; to retrofit our buildings with American labor; and to deploy technologies that are developed in our colleges and university research labs.

We can make this all happen by simply working together.

I hope these comments are helpful and provide a brief perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing us. Pittsburgh is happy to serve as a resource to our federal partners and appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony.