

APPROXIMATE WORD COUNT: 638 (5 minutes)

## Remarks

- Thank you, Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for convening today's Member Hearing Day.
- For those of you who don't know me, I'm the daughter of hardworking Guatemalan immigrants, Maria Elvira and Luis Ramirez, who sacrificed everything to give me a chance at a life they never had.
- I grew up in the Humboldt Park community of Chicago, where I witnessed the struggles of my community, especially among Latino and Black residents, to secure stable housing, access reliable transportation, engage essential services, and raise a family with rising costs of living.
- It was in my community that I first understood the power of infrastructure to shape our lived experiences, positively and negatively.
- You see, I know that investing in our infrastructure is an investment in:
  - **the safety and well-being of our communities,**
  - **the economic development of our region,**
  - **and thriving futures for our families.**
- To give you a positive example:

- We know just how essential public transportation is in our districts.
  - In IL-03, public transit connects residents to high-quality jobs, public amenities, and local businesses, from DuPage County to downtown Chicago and beyond.
  - When public transportation provides reliable, affordable, and accessible service, the benefits go beyond economic development and opportunity.
  - We can achieve cleaner environments, better family health outcomes, and safer communities.
  - This is why I am proud to have secured \$8 million in federal funds from the Department of Transportation's Rail Crossing Elimination program to support the separation of train traffic from pedestrians and cars in the Franklin Park community in my district – a project that will improve safety and mobility for local residents in my district.
- When we invest in public transportation, we have the opportunity to strengthen green, resilient infrastructure and expand choice and equity in our transportation systems.
  - And yet, despite concrete evidence of the benefits of investment in our communities, the list of critical infrastructure projects in Illinois that require our support remains extensive.
    - We have over 1 million lead water service lines that must be replaced to protect the health of Illinois communities—400,000 in the City of Chicago alone.

- 9% of our bridges, located mainly in rural communities, are in dire need of repairs.
  - And my district is desperately in need of additional funding to address rail and road security concerns to protect our families, our environment, and our infrastructure.
- Our investments in transportation and infrastructure yield manifold benefits:
  - they provide essential, foundational stability that enables our neighbors across the nation to fully engage in the life of their communities.
  - They fortify our structural and economic resilience in changing and often volatile times.
  - They safeguard our health and wellbeing and prevent disasters and catastrophes that claim precious lives.
  - And they support workforce development across our districts.
- That is why I am deeply concerned about the state of infrastructure in our country, particularly in light of the recent, ongoing actions of the Trump Administration to attack infrastructure projects and abandon our most vulnerable communities.
  - Tax breaks for billionaires, billions spent on criminalizing immigrants, and millions spent on ad campaigns to televise their authoritarian agenda are not the investments we need.

- Reckless and irresponsible cuts to transportation and infrastructure aren't saving the American people money in the long run, aren't making opportunity more accessible, aren't making us safer, and aren't lowering our cost of living.
- Again, infrastructure shapes our lived experiences, positively and negatively. It shapes the possibilities for our families. It shapes economic access.
- We have the responsibility to ensure working people have everything they need to thrive.
- And so I urge you to reject the idea that transportation and infrastructure programs and investments should be subject to partisan games, political retribution, or bigoted fearmongering.
- Instead, let's embrace the universal benefit of community investment and protect the possibilities available to communities and districts like mine.
- Thank you, and I yield back.