

My name is David Zeballos and I'm the Senior Political Associate for the Center for Climate Integrity.

The Center for Climate Integrity is a nonprofit that helps states and communities across the country hold oil and gas companies accountable for the massive costs of climate change. Through campaigns, communications, and strategic legal support, we aim to ensure that major fossil fuel companies are held accountable for their climate lies and pay their fair share of the enormous costs of climate change.

Big oil and gas companies learned decades ago that their products would fuel climate change. Instead of sharing that information with the public and helping to lead the clean energy transition, they pivoted to a decades-long campaign of doubt, denial, and disinformation in order to delay climate action and keep us hooked on their products to protect their profits. Now, communities are paying billions of dollars to adapt to and recover from the damages they knew their products would cause.

When we talk about climate accountability, we are talking about holding these companies accountable to make them, and not taxpayers, pay for the harm they knowingly caused.

Hundreds of pages of internal industry documents uncovered by journalists and researchers show that fossil fuel companies *knew as early as the 1960s* that burning fossil fuels would raise global temperatures and could lead to "catastrophic" consequences.

By the 1980s, the industry launched a massive, decades-long, coordinated campaign to lie to the public, lawmakers, and the media about the catastrophic impacts they knew their fossil fuel products would cause. The industry set up and funded front groups with innocuous-sounding names like the "Global Climate Coalition" and the "Information Council on the Environment" to do its PR work.

They spent millions of dollars on false advertising, scientists for hire, front groups, and more.

Meanwhile, the industry took the issue seriously enough to protect their drilling infrastructure from sea-level rise and other harmful climate impacts they knew would occur. All while continuing to publicly undermine the science and lie about the role of fossil fuels in perpetuating the climate crisis.

And now, instead of outright denying climate change like they did in past PR campaigns – the industry is now using greenwashing tactics to mislead the public about their commitment to solutions, even while they double down on their fossil fuel businesses. Academic studies have also shown that companies like Exxon have sought to push a narrative that shifts the blame and responsibility of climate change onto consumers, the very public they have misled for decades.. All while continuing to pollute and scale up fossil fuel production.

Fossil fuel companies have made trillions of dollars from the products that cause climate change

and they continue to delay and block climate action to this day.

And now, communities across the country are facing staggering costs to adapt to a worsening climate crisis.

As extreme weather events become frequent and more severe, taxpayers are being slammed *not only* by a massive bill for climate-driven disaster recovery, but *also* for resilience and adaptation projects needed to defend and protect our communities from future harm.

To help calculate some of these climate costs, CCI, Resilient Analytics, and Scioto Analysis recently released a report, titled “Pennsylvania’s Looming Climate Cost Crisis: The Rising Price to Protect Communities from Extreme Heat, Precipitation, and Sea-Level Rise.” This is the first-ever attempt to determine the costs Pennsylvania municipalities will face to protect infrastructure and communities from climate change.

The report calculates the costs of adapting to eight climate impacts for every municipality in Pennsylvania.

The study finds that municipal governments across Pennsylvania face more than \$15 billion in climate adaptation costs by 2040, or nearly \$1 billion a year, to protect residents from hotter weather, heavier rain, and rising sea levels. I encourage elected leaders to take a closer look and see what these 8 impacts will cost the municipalities they represent.

I want to also acknowledge that we are not all equally impacted by these harms. The costs and damages of climate change fall hardest and disproportionately on environmental justice communities that have been historically underserved due to systemic racism and inequality. With more exposure to air pollution, heat waves, flooding, and unsafe drinking water *and* disinvestment in local infrastructure, environmental justice communities – in particular, communities of color – are uniquely impacted by climate change and the pollution that causes it.

So who should be the ones to cover the costs of climate damages? Taxpayers and impacted communities? Or the companies who knowingly created and continue to profit from the climate emergency we are now facing?

Across the country, eight states, 36 municipalities, Washington DC, and one industry trade association are suing major oil and gas corporations for deceiving the public about the climate damages they knew their products would cause. These cases are brought under a number of legal theories, including common law torts, products liability, consumer protection, and even racketeering.

These cases are steadily marching toward trial. Courts across the country have thus far unanimously ruled against Big Oil’s efforts to stop these lawsuits from proceeding in state courts. In Massachusetts and Hawaii, cases are already entering pretrial discovery.

This is a familiar story. Just like Big Tobacco, just like the opioid manufacturers — when companies lie about the danger of their products, they must be held accountable for the

resulting damage.

Members of environmental justice communities need to be part of the conversation around climate accountability from start to finish. If these lawsuits — and other climate accountability efforts — are successful, policymakers and other key decision-makers *must* ensure that members of the communities most impacted are part of the decision-making process when it comes time to decide how and where those recovered dollars are spent.

State and local leaders have an important role to play in supporting these accountability efforts and making polluters pay for the damage they have caused. You can lead the charge to calculate local climate change adaptation costs, condemn climate disinformation, raise awareness for urgent action on the climate crisis, and much more.

The fossil fuel industry knowingly caused the climate crisis and continues to profit from climate pollution while our communities pay the price. It is more urgent than ever to hold these companies accountable so that your communities are not left holding the bill for the mess that Big Oil made.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to provide testimony today.