Good morning Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, and Members of the Committee. I want to thank you for this invitation to discuss the nation’s infrastructure needs, with a particular focus on H.R. 2741, the Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow’s America Act or LIFT Act.

My name is Brian Wahler and I am Mayor of Piscataway, New Jersey, where I am now in my fifth term, having first been elected in 2000. I appear today on behalf of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, a national nonpartisan organization, representing mayors of the more than 1,400 cities with a population of 30,000 or more. I appear today on behalf of the U.S. mayors’ organization, where I serve as an Advisory Board Member and as Chair of the organization’s Membership Committee.

Piscataway is a community of more than 58,000, home to much of Rutgers University, and by order of General George Washington in 1778, the site of the first, national Fourth of July celebration. We are proud to be the seventh most diverse municipality in New Jersey – a state itself vibrant and multi-cultural. We’re a telecommunications town – lots of IT service clusters – and great, new local jobs are being created each day by new, state-of-the-art fulfillment centers in the Township.

In my capacities at the Conference of Mayors, I have seen firsthand the broad and enduring support and advocacy of the nation’s mayors – Democrats, Independents and Republicans, representing cities big or small in every part of the nation – as they called for increased federal investment in our nation’s infrastructure.

I also appear here today as a representative of local government, the level of government which has outperformed its partners – the federal government and the states – in growing new revenue support for our infrastructure needs. I asked the Conference of Mayors to analyze infrastructure investment data for the most recent decade (2005 – 2015, the last 10-year period with available data) where it found that local governments raised their new revenue commitments to water/wastewater and highways by nearly $80 billion annually. In these two areas, albeit our top two largest sectors of infrastructure spending, local governments raised their commitments by
the same amount that would be required to achieve the $2 trillion in new federal investment being discussed at a recent White House meeting. A goal of $2 trillion over 25 years can be achieved by raising $80 billion annually in new revenues.

These efforts have not come without a price. As cities and counties have directed a larger share of their local tax capacity to grow their infrastructure commitments, the federal government has mostly treaded water, seemingly content with maintaining historic spending levels or adjusting them slightly for inflation. One exception to this has been the rapid rise in federal spending to rebuild infrastructure following climate-related disasters, where Hurricane Sandy funding, as one example, proved so vital to recovery efforts in my state, and we thank you for that.

Importantly, we are now seeing more examples of cities that do not have the tax capacity to grow their infrastructure (and other local service) commitments as dramatically, as others have. As such, the LIFT Act, when enacted, is both timely and vital to future infrastructure investment. The LIFT Act reverses flat and/or declining federal spending commitments, by expanding investment levels in water and transportation and stepping up efforts in the energy sector that are so important now.

As you address the larger issues of infrastructure, let me just share a few additional points before I speak to the provisions of the LIFT Act before us. The biggest challenge before you today is how to get something done this year or certainly in this Congress – to get started in reversing the decline of federal investment in these vital systems. This explains why when the mayors came together to craft their infrastructure plan – Mayors’ Infrastructure Priorities for the 116th Congress – we focused on traditional infrastructure issues.

Specifically, we set forth recommendations in these issue areas:
1. Transportation: Highways and Transit, Ports and Aviation;
2. Water Infrastructure: Water, Wastewater and Water Resources;
4. Community Infrastructure: CDBG and Brownfields; and

You will note that broadband and wireless infrastructure is not in our plan and let me talk about this issue briefly. In larger cities, broadband networks are largely being provided by the private sector. The private sector’s willingness to extend networks into low-income and disadvantaged neighborhoods, however, has been uneven. Mayors further recognize there are challenges in the economics of broadband access in more remote and hard to serve areas where public investment, public-private partnerships and federal investment in the form of Connect America Funds or new investments will be required. We support those efforts as we support the efforts of the universal service funds to make broadband services available to urban constituents that cannot afford to pay the price of services. For our cities, we would simply ask that Congress not act (nor allow the FCC to act) in ways that diminish our property rights and existing authorities to manage and seek market-based compensation for the use of our local rights-of-way and other public property. Legislation, such as HR 530, that seeks to return local authority over wireless deployments is just the type of leadership that mayors need from Congress. Further, Congress can provide a service to all Americans by refusing to accept the false narrative that diminishing
or subordinating larger cities’ property rights will somehow translate into industry investment in rural America with new state-of-the-art technologies.

We have come to the point where it is time to act and respond to the urgency of all of this. We know about the threats of a failing infrastructure – and they are growing. And, there are new challenges that most days seem even more immediate, like reducing our carbon use and fortifying and hardening existing infrastructures including addressing cybersecurity threats. And, new opportunities as more cities work toward a different and more sustainable future, one we often characterize as a future of “smart cities.”

Mayors and other local leaders have had some success in raising revenues from the voters and we have proven that voters are not reflexively opposed to fee or tax increases. If you make the case and tell the voters what the funds pay for and what the benefits will be, they are more likely to support new revenues including tax and fee increases.

Making this case here can be challenging given the distance between Washington and your districts. As such, we have been urging you as policy-makers to “localize” as much of this new infrastructure funding as possible so voters have confidence and certainty that portions of any new funding will actually reach their communities and other places in their districts.

As such, we urge you to:

- Renew funding to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, as the LIFT Act proposes to do, whereby we know that 68 cents of every dollar is directed to individual cities and counties throughout the U.S. to help them reduce energy use and emissions.
- Increase funding commitments to the Community Development Block Grant Program, an initiative developed and advocated by President Nixon, where 70 cents of every dollar goes to a specific list of cities and counties by formula to improve neighborhood infrastructure, allowing us to serve more people at less public cost by using existing infrastructure already in place.
- In transportation, when we invest in public transportation, we know that 79 cents of every dollar is directed to a specific transit provider and that 34 cents of every dollar allocated to the Surface Transportation Block Grant is delivered to the MPO areas with 200,000 or more people.

Localizing these funds will help each of you tell the story of where these infrastructure dollars will be invested, and your legislation will help local taxpayers who now understand that our needs have grown beyond the capacity of cities, towns and counties to fund alone. As I mentioned, local officials are unified more than ever on the importance and urgency of infrastructure investment, and they will support you.

THE LIFT ACT

I join the Conference of Mayors in endorsing H.R. 2741, the LIFT Act. This bill addresses many priorities for the nation’s communities including the additional allocations for the Safe Drinking Water SRF program as well as resources to help us deal with PFAs and lead that is found in our schools and child care facilities. We also support additional funding for the Brownfields program
which this Committee reauthorized last year and which my colleague, Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage, testified. We commend the Committee for recognizing the importance of both of these topics and for authorizing the needed resources to help our communities. I want to thank this Committee for their work on these issues and endorse the additional funding for these programs.

I also would like to make the case not just for why this legislation is needed but also why it will be successful. Infrastructure is inherently local and place-based, even infrastructure that links states relies on the specific use of land or air corridors. This is where the infrastructure improvements are most needed, and experience demonstrates that local governments are the most effective level of implementation, even commercial or industrial infrastructure relies on local government cooperation.

Cities must be an integral part of our nation’s strategy to dramatically increase energy efficiency and conservation practices, increase the electricity generated by clean energy sources, and achieve clean air goals. Cities often play the role of driving the nation’s economic engine, and this is important because the high level of economic activity yields federal government revenue streams through fees and taxes and that is necessary to provide federal financial assistance for national programs. An IHS Markit and U.S. Conference of Mayors, City/county study estimated metro economies in 2017 were home to 91.2% of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product; 91.6% of wage income; and 88% of the nation’s jobs. In that same year, 95.9% of all new jobs occurred in US metro cities and counties.

US Metros continue to be the engines of our nation’s growth. The metro proportion of GDP is 0.5 percentage points higher than a decade ago, and 1.5 percentage points higher than two decades ago. Their share of economic growth in 2017 was even greater – metros contributed 99.5% ($337 billion) of the increase in real GDP.

These economic factors suggest that any national strategy to address climate change and reduce pollution must include a local/metro component given the role cities play in the national and global economy and the ability to bring projects to market.

And while the Conference is supportive of the entirety of the LIFT Act, I want to focus my comments today on Title III that deals with Clean Energy Infrastructure.

**Weatherization grants and smart buildings**

Local governments recognize the value in energy demand management made possible by weatherization and smart building technology because it achieves the efficiency, conservation, clean air and cost control objectives we pursue. Buildings may account for 30 percent or more of carbon emissions. Weatherization programs have proven reliable over time. Local governments have developed Best Practices based on retrofitting or redesigning public buildings. Now smart building controls combined with weatherization practices have the potential for effective reductions in the carbon footprint of buildings.
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program Reauthorization

The Conference of Mayors commends this Committee for including the reauthorization of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG). This component places a clear emphasis on energy infrastructure investment at the local level that will help deliver energy independence, diversity of energy for reliability, real-time improvement of building energy efficiency, more efficient city lighting and the ability to achieve clean energy, clean air and consumer savings from cheaper renewable energy as prices continue to decline.

The Conference of Mayors has studied both the roll-out of the EECBG program and project performance in the form of best practices reviews. The EECBG program has allowed communities to develop a variety of successful energy efficiency and conservation projects and programs. In particular, communities receiving EECBG are required to develop comprehensive energy audits and develop plans to reduce energy use and cost of service. The projects and programs include more than a dozen eligible applications of grant money. Communities leverage local resources to add to the grant award amount, so the community has skin in the game, and there is a positive local-regional multiplier. Communities receiving EECBG awards are required to report on the implementation of projects/programs, and an Oak Ridge Laboratories report commended the program as one of the most successful programs in bringing energy efficiency and conservation to communities.

Why Local Government Needs Grants

The EECBG program relies on direct to local government grants to develop and execute energy efficiency and conservation projects/programs. The grant program is population based but makes room for rural and low population areas to receive awards. EECBG is the single most important way to kick start local investment because the single greatest impediment to infrastructure investment is finding the capital for the investment. This grant provides some or all of the funding needed to commit to proceed.

What are the grants used for? The EECBG program has more than a dozen eligibilities that have created possibilities that are now best practices in many communities. Grants in this program provide for planning and feasibility studies, technical assistance to local government, purchase and deploy technology, develop long range energy planning. One of the most important lessons community leaders have learned is that the future of energy in those communities will soon be clean energy, and that the independent actions of a thousand communities will proceed. We urge the Committee to be a partner by approving HR 2741.

The EECBG Program Structure and Why It Works

The EECBG program is designed to move funds directly to local governments without lengthy application processes and overly bureaucratic hoops to delay implementation. Through a formula based principally on population, cities over 35,000 in population and counties over 200,000
population receive funds without going through state bureaucracies or federal competitions where there are more losers than winners.

For non-entitlement communities who do not meet these employment thresholds, states receive about 28% of EECBG funds to distribute to these smaller communities. Smaller states are guaranteed a minimum level, and the ten most populous cities and counties in every state can participate in the directly-funded formula program.

This Block Grant approach recognizes that cities and smaller communities all across the country would like to improve efficiencies that in turn reduce pollution and GHG emissions.

The broad array of eligible energy efficiency and conservation activities ensures that the plans can be tailored to meet the energy needs and clean air goals of each jurisdiction. Investments made in the first set of EECBG awards yielded energy cost savings and reduced carbon emissions. Some of these projects have become Best Practices (and I have attached a report on these), expediting significant and sometimes transformational change.

- One example is the dramatic shift to LED street lighting, which started around 2009, the year that EECBG was funded. Up to that point, most cities relied on older and more inefficient street lighting technologies, as LEDs were mostly deployed on traffic signals. Through the initial and only round of EECBG funding, cities and urban counties were able to pilot and even broadly deploy the more efficient LEDs for street lighting, moving beyond LEDs only for traffic signals. In our own backyard, Arlington County was able to pilot 1,800 LED street lights with EECBG funding, which was so successful the county eventually purchased 7,000 LED street lights. It is this kind of leveraging that is possible under the EECBG program that not only saves energy and reduces emissions but also saves taxpayers’ money.

- The same potential is possible in the energy retrofit of existing buildings. Cities have begun to work with existing building owners to encourage the development of green roofs, the installation of solar panels and energy efficient windows, and the application of smart building technology to provide households with the ability to control energy consumption, a critical factor in optimizing demand management and save money.

- Energy efficiency and conservation codes for new building construction are effectively reducing the traditional carbon footprint of new infrastructure and this bakes in carbon reductions and energy savings from day one.

- Local governments are also switching their fleets to lower carbon fuel alternatives as well as promoting alternative fuel infrastructure, such as Electric-Vehicle Charging Stations, that will be needed if we want citizens to use this technology.

In my own city, we require many new developments, to have Electric Vehicle plug-in charging stations in their parking area which includes our new community center.
We also used our EECBG money to put solar panels on our public works building. This solar array has produced more than 1.5 million kilowatt hours for the Township, replacing fossil fuels and resulting in avoiding pollution of nearly 1.9 million pounds of carbon dioxide (CO2), more than 2,700 pounds of sulfur oxides (SOx), and almost 13,000 pounds of nitrogen oxide (NOx).

We also signed a contract with Great Eastern Energy that starting on June 1, 2018, 20 percent of the energy that the Township uses for municipal purposes comes from environmentally friendly, renewable sources. This is projected to save more than 4.3 million kilowatts of fossil fuel-created electricity over the subsequent two years.

The federal government simply does not have access to the broad and diverse building and fleet sector in every community to expedite implementation of these technologies. Some cities have already begun to pass local laws and ordinances establishing timelines for energy retrofits and carbon reduction. Essential to achieving clean energy is a “bottoms up” community level approach to work particularly with the transportation, residential and commercial sectors to achieve as much energy efficiency, renewable clean energy, and conservation as possible to dramatically reduce CO2 emissions. Local government needs a strong federal partnership and HR 2741 provides the practical framework to move forward.

Why Urgent Action is Needed

The National Climate Assessment and the IPCC reports indicate that we must limit global warming by 1.5 degrees by 2030 in order to avoid catastrophic impacts on the world. The nation’s mayors take the threat of widespread catastrophic impacts seriously and are called to action. Local government leadership is committed to lowering the economy’s carbon foundation with due diligence. Additionally, military leaders have repeatedly warned about the impact that climate change, severe weather events, and sea level rise may have on destabilizing communities. They have stressed the strategic importance of our country becoming energy independent and self-reliant as it relates to our energy needs.

A recent EPA report (see Table) provides estimates of the volume of CO2/GHG emissions. Local governments are targeting these emission sources and will need help from the federal government. Cities and rural communities seek to fast-track projects to reduce the volume of CO2 emissions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>End-Use Sector Emissions of CO2 Eq. from Fossil Fuel Combustion, 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation 1,805 MMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial 1,315 MMT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential 912 MMT</td>
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<td>Commercial 839 MMT</td>
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CO2 was 81.6% of all GHG emissions.

Mayors have been actively engaged in learning about decarbonization and placing policies and practices in effect to achieve that goal. Since 2005 the nation’s Mayors of cities of all sizes have been on the forefront of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions through increasing energy efficiency and conservation efforts and promoting renewable energy sources.

The Conference of Mayors’ Alliance for a Sustainable Future conducted a 2018 Survey of 158 cities of which about half were communities that were less than 100,000 in population. Some of the major findings indicated that:

- 60% of cities have launched or expanded a climate initiative or policy in the past year;
- 65% of cities procure renewable electricity for municipal operations;
- 70% of cities have energy efficiency policies for new and existing municipal buildings;
- 83% of cities are partnering with the business community for support in advancing transportation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency solutions.

We know we need to do more. There is tremendous potential to expand these activities and expedite implementation of technologies. However, we cannot do it alone and especially not without resources. Which is why the reauthorization and fully funding the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program is vitally important.

**Clean Distributed Energy Systems and Solar Installations in Low Income and Underserved Communities**

The Conference of Mayors supports both clean distributed energy systems and solar installations in low income and underserved communities. These provisions are both inclusive and innovative. The low-income solar grant program targets an income group that struggles to afford basic utilities and could help reduce household energy costs as well as reducing carbon emissions.

The Clean Distributed Energy Systems in this provision (Local Energy Supply and Resilience Act) promotes energy diversity and resilience by providing loans for a variety of activities. Mayors learned from investments made under the EECBG program that renewable and clean fuels energy generation also allows communities to act in conjunction with the grid and as an island. The loan program can unleash the potential of distributed energy systems and microgrids as islands, thereby creating redundant energy systems that are not totally reliant on a central transmission line and their traditional vulnerabilities.

**Conclusion**

I want to thank Chairman Pallone and this Committee for inviting me to testify before you on the LIFT Act. We are at a critical juncture on infrastructure investment, and I strongly urge you, on behalf of the nation’s Mayors, that this Committee and this Congress pass and fully fund this much-needed legislation.