

**“Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Members’ Day Hearing”
Testimony of Rep. Dan Kildee**

May 15, 2019

Thank you, Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, for the opportunity to provide my views on an infrastructure package.

In much of my work prior to coming to Congress, and one of my main areas of focus since being elected, has been to focus on the condition of America’s older, industrial cities and towns. From small rural towns to larger cities, there are too many places across our country that continue to be one mistake away from fiscal failure. As Congress considers a robust infrastructure package, we must look for ways to specifically lift this subset of fiscally-stressed communities.

My hometown of Flint, Michigan has captured many newspaper headlines in recent years. But even before the water crisis, Flint faced unique challenges as an older, industrial city: population loss, the outsourcing of jobs and rampant blight. Flint isn’t an anomaly; a whole subset of America’s cities and towns face similar challenges. There are places in every region of the country, like my hometown, that face similar stressors.

These are real challenges that require action. It is long past time for us to have a national strategy about how we approach and invest in America’s cities and towns. We cannot simply let these communities—where millions of people live, work and raise their families—fall further into decline. America needs these communities to succeed. Sadly, federal policy has either failed to focus on these places altogether or taken a balance-sheet approach to managing decline that has led to a worse quality of life for those living in these communities.

We need smart federal policy that supports increased opportunity and promotes growth. We need policies that promote investment in the already-built environment. Simply put, we need a Marshall Plan for America’s older, industrial cities and towns. That is where a big, bold infrastructure plan comes into play.

Our infrastructure needs are pressing. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives the U.S. a D+ and estimates the U.S. will need to invest \$4.9 trillion by 2025. In many of the communities that I represent—Flint, Saginaw, Bay City and Oscoda—investment in our roads, bridges and water systems is sorely needed. But as Congress considers going big on infrastructure, we must ensure that new infrastructure investment benefits all communities.

Without a clear plan and specific resources for hardest hit communities, a massive influx of new capital in the form of an infrastructure package could potentially contribute to further economic disparity. Any infrastructure package needs to include a specific plan that ensures older, industrial cities are in the same condition to compete for capital and investment as more affluent communities.

Specifically, we must set aside funding to help older communities remove the remnants of the past. This includes funding for remediation and demolition of vacant commercial and residential buildings and advanced funding for Brownfields cleanup. Time is the enemy of business and real

estate deals; it is vital that vacant industrial, commercial and residential spaces are remediated and well-positioned for capital investment. We should also set aside funding for communities that have experienced significant population loss, which creates great fiscal challenges for local governments to provide basic services. And it should address the pressing needs of areas with chronically debilitated housing markets.

Communities like my hometown of Flint are resilient communities—they just need a fighting chance. Ensuring an infrastructure package brings these communities up to a level playing field where they can compete for new economic investment and jobs will help lift our older, industrial cities and towns across America and the millions of families who live within them.

I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure an infrastructure bill will help all of America's cities and towns.