THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING

Opening Statement for Edward J. Markey (D-MA)

"Clearing the Smoke: Understanding the Impacts of Black Carbon Pollution"
Select Committee on Energy Independence
and Global Warming

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On December 5th, 1952, soot-filled smoke from London's factories and fireplaces settled on the city and over the next few days thousands of people died from the soot and fumes. For years, the iconic image of Los Angeles was not the Hollywood sign, it was an obscured skyline. And while much progress has been made to clean up this pollution, clouds of sooty smoke continue to blanket homes from Mexico City to Mumbai, harming the health of millions of people.

Soot is the visible portion of carbon pollution from smokestacks and tailpipes, burning fields and forests. It sticks to our lungs. It causes asthma and heart disease. It is what gives smoke its ominous color.

And as the saying goes—where there is smoke, there is fire. In this case, the fire is increased global warming.

The black carbon in soot is one of the most potent warming agents affecting our planet. From diesel trucks to inefficient factories, from the cook stoves in Southeast Asia to the burning forests of the Amazon, black carbon and other components of soot rise into the atmosphere every time we burn fossil fuel or biomass. There, black carbon absorbs sunlight and traps heat. Stuck on water drops and ice crystals, black carbon reduces the cooling effect of clouds. And when black carbon eventually falls out of the air and settles onto ice sheets and mountain snowpack, it accelerates the melting of ice and snow, contributing to rising sea levels and threatening water supplies.

Cutting emissions of black carbon could yield rapid benefits for our health and climate. Black carbon only stays in the atmosphere for a few days to weeks before settling out. That means that a global effort to reduce these emissions would act fast to prevent respiratory disease and aid in the fight against global warming pollution. And we already have the technologies needed to achieve deep reductions including particle filters, improved diesel engines, and efficient cook stoves. Developing and installing these technologies would create jobs and move us forward in the clean energy economy.

Now, I am sure some will argue that if we cut black carbon pollution, we can delay on reducing greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. This simply will not address the

momentous challenge that we face. For homebuyers, a solid down payment can keep the mortgage more manageable, but they still have to make the monthly payments. If we want to keep the planet a viable residence, a down payment in the form of black carbon reductions won't replace the need to make sustained investments in clean energy. Each year of delay will make it more difficult to keep temperatures from rising and will continue to put the American economy at a competitive disadvantage.

We recently took steps to cut black carbon and greenhouse gas pollution. Last year, the House passed the Waxman-Markey American Clean Energy and Security Act, which will set us on a pollution cutting path and at the same time create millions of new jobs, making America the global leader of the clean energy economy. Working with Representative Inslee, we incorporated a number of provisions that would cut emissions of black carbon here at home and seek opportunities to curb emissions abroad. This will provide innumerable benefits for our health and climate.

The deadly, soot-filled London fog of 1952 encouraged the UK to enact their own clean air laws in 1956. My hope today is that, even in the fog of war that sometimes envelopes our progress on clean energy and climate change, that we can still clear the smoke to find common ground on issues like black carbon.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and hearing from them how Congress can help address this important issue.