Statement of Representative Harley Rouda

Before the House Committee on Ways and Means
Member Day
Tuesday, June 4, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and other Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today to highlight two pieces of legislation within the Committee's jurisdiction.

On March 27, I introduced H.R. 1929, which would permanently extend the fuel cell motor vehicle tax credit. This tax credit, which lapsed on January 1, 2018, has provided a strong incentive to help encourage the adoption of fuel cell technology, which has the potential to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and improve our ability to climate change.

California's 48th congressional district is the proud home of the American headquarters of two companies that have been instrumental in the development of fuel cell motor vehicle technology, Hyundai and Toyota Racing Development.

Unfortunately, our federal tax policy wrongly supports the use of dirty energy sources. For every 80 dollars that the federal government provides in tax incentives for fossil fuels, it offers only one dollar for renewable energy. We cannot effectively combat climate change if the deck is stacked against these clean energy technologies.

My bill offers certainty to manufacturers and consumers, which would bolster the rollout of fuel cell technology in our cars and trucks. I encourage the Committee to take up this straightforward legislation.

I also would like to call your attention to legislation that I, along with our colleague and a member of this Committee, Congresswoman Jackie Walorski of Indiana, will introduce today to expand access to retirement savings for former family caregivers.

This Committee has already demonstrated its capacity to advance bipartisan legislation to expand opportunities for Americans to save for their retirement with the passage of SECURE Act. As Americans across the country seek to ensure they have a strong safety net for their retirement, it is important that we provide adequate access to retirement savings vehicles.

One such way that we have helped Americans save for their retirement is through catch-up contributions. Under current law, employees aged 50 and older are eligible to utilize catch-up contributions to make additional deposits to their 401(k) plans, IRAs, and other eligible retirement accounts.

Although using catch-up contributions can be an important mechanism for many Americans to build their retirement savings, it can still not be enough for individuals that take time out of the workforce to care for family members. These individuals often miss opportunities to save for their retirement for multiple years. This disparity predominantly impacts women, since women are more likely to take more time to act as family caregivers full-time.

Our bipartisan bill, the Expanding Access to Retirement Savings for Caregivers Act, would allow individuals that took at least one year out of the workforce and received no earned income primarily for the purposes of caring for a family member to make catch-up contributions in years prior to age 50. These former full-time caregivers would be eligible to begin making catch-up contributions at age 50 minus the number of years they spent out of the workforce.

This bill would help us move away from a system that penalizes caregivers and instead offer additional tools for them to enhance their long-term financial security. I urge the Committee to consider this legislation as it continues to work in a bipartisan manner to make it easier for American workers to save for retirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today.