Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Sarah Martik. I am with the Center for Coalfield Justice, an organization based in the Appalachian region of the United States, from the state of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania is the second largest producer of fracked gas in the United States: our position over the Marcellus Shale formation has fast-tracked a boom in fracking that has harmed our health and environment while failing to bring about the economic revitalization promised to us by the fossil fuel industry. Appalachia is expected to be a resilient, water-rich region in the face of the climate crisis, but there will be no access to this water if it is irreversibly polluted or monopolized for the production of plastic.

To that end, I am here to advocate for the strongest possible global plastics treaty. A successful treaty will contain legally-binding measures to reduce plastic production, put a moratorium on petrochemical development, and will phase out toxics, relying on the precautionary principle to evaluate which substances are acceptable to be brought into our environment. A successful treaty will invest in sustainable non-plastic solutions like reuse systems, scaling these up even in rural areas. And most importantly, a successful treaty will support impacted communities and workers around the world by incentivizing the implementation of improved systems and processes, creating safe, sustainable jobs in the process.

Many delegates and observers have addressed the need to bring about a Just Transition. My state of Pennsylvania is no stranger to feelings of uncertainty that come with transitioning an economy. The decline of the coal and steel industries is still felt deeply in so many small towns, including the one where I grew up and lived for 28 years. Fracking and plastic production were sold to us as the “just transition” we had been practically begging for, but no justice and no real economic revitalization ever came. However, the difference between what happened to coal communities and what fear-mongers claim will happen to communities that rely on plastic production is that we have an opportunity to make a plan - a dependable, uniformly applied plan - and to commit ourselves to finally investing in the innovative, compassionate, and hard-working people within these communities, not just in industries that extract from us.

I thank you for your time and thank you in advance for prioritizing the needs of people in this process. Thank you.