



September 12, 2019

Senator Brian Schatz
Chair, Democrats Special Committee on the Climate Crisis
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: The Fight to Save Winter: Professional Athletes for Climate Action, Testimony for the Democrats Special Committee on the Climate Crisis from Professional Ski Mountaineer Caroline Gleich

Good afternoon Senator Schatz and members of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. My name is Caroline Gleich, and I am a professional ski mountaineer from Park City, Utah. I built a career working as an ambassador for brands including Patagonia, Keen, Julbo, and Movement Skis.

I grew up in Rochester, Minnesota, but after countless road trips to ski the greatest snow on earth in Utah, I was hooked. When I was fifteen, my family made the move to the Wasatch Mountains so I could be closer to my passions: climbing and skiing. Nearly two decades later, I am most proud of becoming the fourth person— and the first female— to climb and ski a collection of 90 challenging lines in the Wasatch called the Chuting Gallery, which Freeskier Magazine described as ‘a feat that can’t be understated.’ More recently, I’ve had my eyes set on the Himalaya, and in May, I climbed Everest.

Having spent my lifetime exploring mountain environments, I have witnessed the impacts of climate change firsthand. It is clear to me our winters are warming and our snowpack is diminishing. As an alpinist, I climb a great deal of glaciers and ice, and there is no doubt increased temperatures are melting away both my sport and my livelihood.

When on expeditions, I pay close attention to the conditions around me as our lives often depend on it. We make observations, and we report back to our partners and our community, giving everyone the critical information they need to make the best decisions possible.

I am present today to give you such a report, and share that unfortunately, conditions are changing for the worse. Climate change is making both climbing and ski mountaineering more dangerous. I’m asking you to consider this field report as guides do— with the utmost scrutiny to select the best path forward. Fortunately, you have many options to take action to mitigate the worsening conditions.

In my role as an ambassador for Protect Our Winters, I have worked to educate the outdoor recreation community on the systemic policy changes necessary to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions at scale. I believe in setting an economy-wide price on carbon, requiring polluters to pay for their emissions by implementing market based mechanisms that can garner bipartisan support. I believe in investing in a clean energy economy and moving toward the science-based target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. I believe in reducing emissions from our transportation sector by rapidly deploying zero-emission vehicles nationwide. And, perhaps closest to my heart, I believe in protecting public lands from fossil fuel extraction, especially in a time when it is critical we transition to clean energy.

I understand we are in incredibly challenging times, and passage of such legislation seems unfeasible. We have a president who repeatedly slashes all climate progress and those that desire climate action in the

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Senate are in the minority. It's daunting. But setbacks should never inhibit progress toward pursuing your dreams. Just six weeks before I headed to Nepal to begin my journey up Everest, I suffered a torn ACL while skiing in Utah. The crash was heartbreaking. But you don't train to climb Everest in two or three months. This is a lifelong process. And even though I was living one of my worst nightmares, I accepted my reality. And I chose to tell the story of perseverance.

I chose action over apathy. I chose to seek the improbable. We must do the same for our climate. I invite you to belong to the solution and continue to climb this mountain. I have no doubt, even with the unbelievable challenges we face, that we will reach the summit. Thank you.