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STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY – NRC ANNUAL ASSESSMENT MEETING FOR PILGRIM NUCLEAR POWER STATION – MARCH 21, 2017

When the Nuclear Regulatory Commission unintentionally released its preliminary inspection report for Pilgrim nuclear power plant, the public finally learned that there was a “safety culture problem” at the facility “that a bunch of talking probably won’t fix.” Yet Entergy has continued with its empty promises. When violations of safety rules were discovered, Entergy would put employees and supervisors on a 90-day “improvement plan” consisting of three 30-minute meetings with their boss.

Now, as the NRC prepares its inspection report, it wants to reassure the public that these “robust conversations,” which will now occur for longer than 90 days, will be enough to fix the pervasive safety problems at Pilgrim. Those include safety culture problems, such as supervisors on targeted improvement plans not knowing they were on the plans, as well as technical issues such as leaks in the reactor’s steam isolation valves, which prevent radioactive release into the environment. But even the NRC acknowledges that Entergy does not yet have an appropriate plan of action to ensure that identified safety issues will not happen again.

Massachusetts residents, and especially those residing near Pilgrim, deserve to know that Entergy and the NRC have plans in place that will ensure public safety, and reverse course for one of the most troubled nuclear plants in the country. Until Entergy shows it has a detailed plan of action, the public will lack that assurance.

I urge Entergy to support its hardworking staff with the resources necessary to run this plant safely. Entergy’s initial steps toward safety, while technically underway, are still overwhelmingly insufficient to guarantee the safety of our residents.