
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United State Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

April 13, 2020

Honorable Leaders,

Congratulations on achieving overwhelming support for the March 27 package of measures to help the country through the Covid-19 crisis. As you continue your work to address the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned medical and public health organizations urge you to design legislation that protects Americans from public health emergencies, both now and in the future. Investing in public health is a win-win for American communities, particularly in light of the additional health harms created by climate change.

COVID-19 demonstrates clearly that we need to heed science and health experts, and that the earlier we take action to prevent and prepare for the worst, the more lives will be saved. Investments now can prevent future health emergencies, including both future pandemics and the worsening health impacts of climate change. The health, economic, and social impacts of the warming climate are already occurring and will be devastating without action now to mitigate climate change and prepare for its widely recognized impacts. These include extreme heat, storms, floods, and fires (with their accompanying health harms); changing transmission of mosquito and tick-borne diseases; and threats to our food and clean drinking water supply.

It is of the utmost importance that Congress use the massive investments of the coronavirus response legislation wisely to build resilience in the face of these climate-related public health threats. Warming and wildfires also increase ozone and particulate matter pollution, and early evidence suggests that consistent air pollution exposure may make people more susceptible to the symptoms of COVID-19. The COVID-19 crisis is already impeding wildfire preparedness efforts and could place so much stress on our health system that it will hamper the health response required for wildfire and flood emergencies.

We urge you to reference the attached [Policy Action Agenda](#) as you design additional legislation. Doing so will place Congress firmly in a position of addressing the concerns of the health community (see climatehealthaction.org).

1. Provide local and state health departments with the funding needed to identify, prepare for, monitor, and respond to emerging threats, whether pandemics or climate change.
2. Invest in our health care system to ensure that health professionals have the resources and the facilities they need to be prepared in the face of health and climate crises.
3. Jumpstart the needed transformation of our energy, transportation, and agriculture systems to mitigate climate change to protect our health now and for the future. Now is the time to double down on policies that favor renewable energy and energy efficiency; building electrification and weatherization; public transit and active transportation infrastructure; zero-emission trucks, buses, and cars.
4. Enhance community resilience by ensuring access to affordable and healthy food, clean drinking water, green space and healthy ecosystems.

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5. Advance a just transition to alleviate impacts on workers and communities affected by losses related to climate policy and COVID-19 through greater investments in workforce training and development, local hiring programs, and community-driven infrastructure.
 6. Implement permanent policies to support the health of all and protect the most vulnerable populations, such as paid sick leave, paid family medical leave, living wages, and economic security.

These investments can improve community health, reduce health care costs, and reduce the risk of catastrophic health impacts. For example, cleaning up the nation's energy and transportation systems reduces air pollution that exacerbates asthma, heart disease, and diabetes, all of which not only harms those who suffer from these conditions, but also increases their risk for adverse COVID-19 outcomes. We urge you not to roll back or waive public health or environmental protections nor to subsidize the fossil fuels industry as part of any stimulus deal.

Finally, the U.S. lost precious time because Americans were not informed early on about the potential severity of the coronavirus threat. We ask that you provide funding for local health departments to fully engage and inform their communities so that people have the knowledge, the capacity, and the will to support and proactively implement the sometimes difficult actions required to protect health in the era of pandemics and climate change.

We stand ready to assist you in designing the next emergency legislation that addresses the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 through investments that create and expand on state and local climate resilience efforts and protects our communities and our children. The lesson of COVID-19 is to heed the warnings of health professionals and public health experts. Please listen to us now. Climate change is a looming health emergency.

Sincerely,

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Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative
Center for Climate Change and Health
Clean Air Carolina
Climate for Health, ecoAmerica
Climate Psychiatry Alliance
Florida Clinicians for Climate Action
Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action
Health Care Climate Action
Human Impact Partners
National Medical Association

MN Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Arizona
Physicians for Social Responsibility, FL Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Iowa Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Maine Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility, PA Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility, SF Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility, D.C. Chapter
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Vermont Climate and Health Alliance
Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action
Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action