



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome and thank you for being a Climate Change and Health Equity Champion! As a physician, you play an especially important role in protecting patients and communities against the increasing impacts of climate change on health.

Climate change is already affecting the health of our patients, ranging from heat-related illness to poor air quality to weather-related injury and rising food prices. However, we know that these impacts are not felt equally across communities. Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected by climate change. Existing inequities in chronic disease rates and socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty or lack of access to healthy foods or parks, can increase vulnerability to climate change health impacts:

- People with asthma or COPD are at higher risk from increased ozone levels and wildfire smoke.
- Those with cardiovascular disease or diabetes are at increased risk from extreme heat.
- Neighborhoods with a lot of pavement and few parks and trees experience “urban heat island” effects and associated heat-related illness.
- People living in poverty are less able to cope with rising food prices or buy home insurance to help deal with extreme weather events, such as storms or flooding.

We know how to fight climate change and create climate resilient communities. Many climate solutions are good for health:

- Clean energy reduces heart and respiratory disease from air pollution.
- Walking and biking bring all of the health benefits of physical activity.
- Urban greening reduces heat risk and provides many other health and community benefits.

Your voice as a Climate Change and Health Equity Champion is needed now more than ever. Physicians are trusted leaders in every community. Our patients and policymakers expect us to speak out about major threats to their health. We encourage you to use these resources, and others available to Champions, to reach out, talk about climate change and health, and advocate for solutions that reduce the risk of climate catastrophe and the harms of climate change.

We thank you for your commitment, and look forward to supporting you in efforts to ensure that our communities can thrive and be healthy in the face of climate change.

Thank you,

Dr. Margaret Juarez
Chair, NEPO

Lisa Folberg, MPP
President, CMA Foundation