Clinicians for Climate Action New Jersey

Medical and Health Professionals Calling for Change

Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney, Speaker Coughlin and legislative leaders:

The early months of the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the lessons of ignoring scientific consensus. The lack of a coordinated federal government response is estimated to have cost *at least* tens of thousands of lives in 2020 alone.[1] As New Jersey health professionals, we are grateful for your science-driven response, which assuredly saved many lives. Thank you for your outstanding leadership on this public health emergency.

New Jersey Clinicians for Climate Action is a new network of health professionals who are extremely concerned about the sustained health crisis that will arise from humanity's continued reliance on fossil fuels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change continually warns that the window for action is closing rapidly. The unprecedented heat waves and massive fires we are experiencing this summer in North America again underscore the validity of the climate science. We strongly urge you to undertake immediate, dramatic and durable action to protect New Jersey's children and communities from the devastating health impacts of a warming world. Time is of the essence.

Since the transportation sector is the leading source of carbon pollution in New Jersey, we urge you to:

- Join Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Washington DC in signing the Transportation and Climate Initiative program (TCI-P) Memorandum of Understanding.
- Adopt policies to reduce emissions from medium- and heavy-duty trucks and accelerate deployment of zero-emission trucks, including adoption of the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule, Advanced Clean Fleet Rule and Heavy-Duty Omnibus Rule.
- Adopt policies that will dramatically accelerate adoption of electric vehicles, including building out charging infrastructure.
- Adopt policies that will dramatically accelerate the electrification of public transit, including dedicating the funding required to upgrade bus garages and meet the NJ Transit bus fleet electrification timetable established by NJ's electric vehicle law.
- Build a far more capable air quality monitoring and reporting infrastructure, particularly along major highway corridors and communities most overburdened by tailpipe emissions.

The TCI-Program ("TCI-P") represents a pivotal regional approach that will protect the health and well-being of New Jersey residents from vehicular pollutants, long known to cause severe respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and also reduce the state's primary source of carbon pollution and global warming.[2] Fossil fuel-powered automobiles, buses and trucks release pollutants that exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular disease including asthma, various lung diseases, heart disease and many forms of cancer. TCI-P will provide an ongoing funding stream to help promote short- and long-term equitable public health and job growth for all New Jerseyans. Your administration will be the first to decide how to allocate the proceeds from TCI-P, and must strive to maximize equitable outcomes.

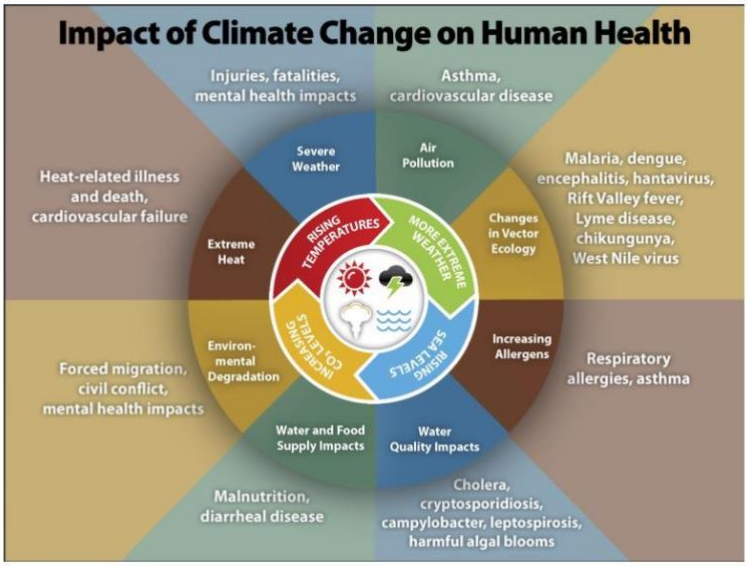
Transportation pollution is an overwhelming environmental, health and equity issue that disproportionately burdens many of New Jersey's most vulnerable residents. In its annual "State of the Air" report, the American Lung Association (ALA) found that "*despite some nationwide progress on cleaning up air pollution, more than 40% of Americans — more than 135 million people — are living in places with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. The burden of living with unhealthy air is not shared equally. People of color are more than three times more likely to be breathing the most polluted air than white people."*[3] Camden and seven other urban New Jersey counties received "F'' grades from the ALA for exceeding the national air quality standard for ground-level ozone.

Because of their location in a major transportation corridor with significant port facilities, some New Jersey communities are over-burdened by pollution associated with movement of goods. Region wide, light-duty trucks, which include SUVs, were responsible for the largest number of premature deaths over

the study year (2,463) followed by light-duty passenger vehicles (1,881) and heavy-duty trucks (1,465).[4] By adopting ACT alongside other policies, New Jersey can deploy zero-emission trucks at a pace and scale that the private sector cannot achieve on its own.

The World Health Organization declared climate change to be "*the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century.*" The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that human populations are already experiencing harm to their health from climate change and predicts that the effects will continue to climb rapidly.[4] The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change states that climate change has *"already produced considerable shifts in the underlying social and environmental determinants of health."* In February, a study from Harvard's TH Chan School of Public Health backed these assertions in startling fashion.[5] It found that more than 8 million people worldwide died in 2018 from fossil fuel pollution (almost equivalent to the population of New York City).

Experts in public health policy focus on the social determinants of health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define social determinants as the "*conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of life-risks and outcomes."* As health care professionals, we want to make sure you see that climate change is the single most powerful and overarching detrimental driver undermining <u>all</u> social determinants of health. One has only to look at the CDC diagram depicting the impacts of climate change on human health to understand why we make that assertion.



New policies need to be implemented that will reduce pollution, support the buildout of safe and clean public transit, and create new economic opportunity. Each of these objectives must vigorously consider the intersections with historically overburdened and underserved communities.

We strongly urge you to take the actions described above.

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[1] "*Dying in a Leadership Vacuum*", New England Journal of Medicine, 10/8/20
[2] *TRECH Research Project Update on Health Benefits of TCI*, Harvard School of Public Health, 2/25/21
[3] *2021 State of the Air Report*, American Lung Association.
[4] *Mortality-based damages per ton due to the on-road mobile sector in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic U.S. by region, vehicle class and precursor*, C.A. Arter et al, Environmental Research Letters, 6/8/21
[5] *Human Health: Impacts, Adaptation and Co-Benefits*, IPCC, 3/2020
[6] "*Fossil Fuel Air Pollution Responsible for 1-in-5 Deaths Worldwide*", Harvard School of Public Health, 2/9/21