

Clinicians for Climate Action New Jersey

Medical and Health Professionals Calling for Change

July 18, 2022

Governor Murphy, Lt. Governor Oliver, Commissioner Persichilli, Senate President Scutari, Speaker Coughlin, and legislative leaders:

[Clinicians for Climate Action New Jersey](#) is a new network of health professionals who are extremely concerned about the health crisis that is arising 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, massive fires and intense storms we are experiencing in North America this summer once 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.

Like our neighboring states, the transportation sector is the leading source of carbon pollution in New Jersey. The time has come for the state to adopt a comprehensive approach to transportation that will protect the health and well-being of New Jersey residents from vehicular pollutants, long known to cause severe respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Fossil fuel-powered automobiles, buses and trucks release pollutants that exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular disease including asthma, multiple lung diseases, heart disease and many forms of cancer. The carbon pollution that drives climate change creates additional extremely concerning health impacts. We must develop a mechanism for an ongoing and sustainable funding stream to address this challenge, and to ensure long-term equitable public health and job growth for all New Jerseyans.

CCANJ appreciates New Jersey's adoption of the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule and Fleet Reporting Rules last year. As we move thru 2022, we urge you to build upon that momentum by:

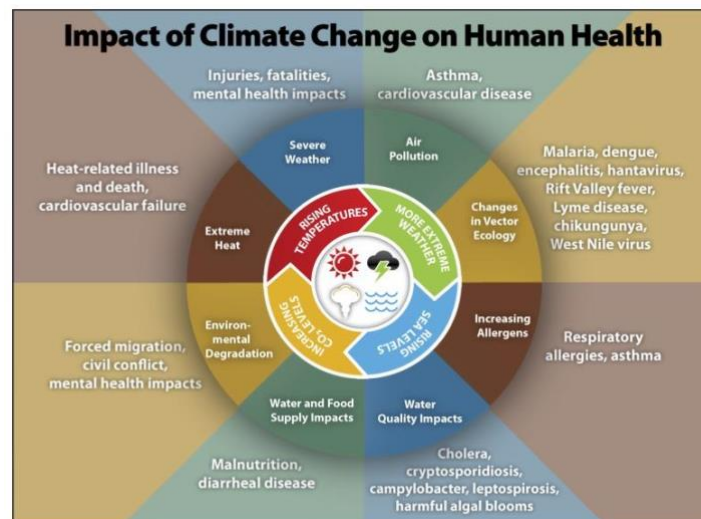
- Signing the electric school bus legislation (S759/A1282) that will require the Department of Environmental Protection to develop and implement a three-year \$45 million electric school bus program (with at least half of the new vehicles deployed in environmental justice communities) and to provide the \$15 million in funding in FY23, and to expand funding by meeting school district demand for electric school buses through the remaining \$1.4 billion in American Rescue Plan dollars.
- Adopting and implementing policies that will dramatically accelerate adoption of electric vehicles of all types, including expanding NJ's electric vehicle rebate and a commensurate acceleration of investment in charging infrastructure through federal and state funds. The NJDEP should adopt the Advanced Clean Cars II program by rule via the California Air Resources Board process using emergency regulations to ensure NJ stays current with its electrification mandates and the California Clean Cars rules.
- Dramatically accelerating the electrification of public transit, including dedicating the funding required to upgrade NJ Transit bus garages, and meet the NJ Transit bus fleet electrification timetable established by NJ's electric vehicle law.
- Ensuring federal funding allocated to New Jersey for transportation are used in a manner that will: (a) aggressively reduce transportation pollution, and (b) decisively address the historical health impact inequities that vehicle and truck air pollution has imposed on densely populated, low-income communities located next to major transportation corridors.
- Building a far more capable air quality monitoring and reporting infrastructure, particularly along major highway corridors and communities most overburdened by tailpipe emissions.

- Engaging our neighboring states in developing and adopting a multi-state solution that leverages the economic power of the mid-Atlantic states to create and implement a new regional approach to shared transportation challenges.

Transportation pollution is an overwhelming environmental, health and equity issue that disproportionately burdens many of New Jersey’s most vulnerable residents. In its 2021 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.*”[1] 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.

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.[2] In February of 2021, a study from Harvard’s TH Chan School of Public Health backed these assertions in startling fashion.[3] The team 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 understand that climate change is the single most powerful and overarching detrimental driver undermining all social determinants of health. One has only to look at the CDC diagram below depicting the impacts of climate change on human health to understand why we make that assertion.



For everyone’s sake - especially those in overburdened and underserved communities - we strongly urge you to take the actions described above.

[1] “[2021 State of the Air Report](#)”, American Lung Association.
 [2] “[Human Health: Impacts, Adaptation and Co-Benefits](#)”, IPCC, 3/2020
 [3] “[Fossil Fuel Air Pollution Responsible for 1-in-5 Deaths Worldwide](#)”, Harvard School of Public Health, 2/9/21