

Health Care Climate Council Calls for Climate Action to Protect Public Health

In just a few weeks, heads of state and other influential leaders will gather in Paris for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in an effort to seek a legally binding, global agreement to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

On the eve of this historic event, 16 of the most influential U.S. health systems are calling on global leaders to take decisive action that will protect human health from climate change, both now and for future generations. Making up the Health Care Climate Council, these health systems represent hospitals across the United States that are committed to climate action.

Without a significant course correction, climate change is destined to wreak irreversible damage to our health and the health of our planet's ecosystem. Climate change is already impacting the social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter – and these impacts are projected to worsen. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths each year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress.

The direct damage costs to health is estimated to be between \$2-4 billion a year by 2030. If left unaddressed, these impacts will only become more difficult and expensive to resolve.

As we near the final stages of negotiations before Paris, we call for a resolution that:

- Secures from key countries strong emission reduction commitments tracked under a transparent accounting system,
- Takes advantage of opportunities to further reduce global emissions right now through new and existing international partnerships,
- Establishes tools to ensure that the current targets are strengthened over time regularly and in a timely manner, and
- Supports actions to protect the most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change, mobilizing additional support in subsequent years, and securing more public financing for adaptation.

The Health Care Council supports domestic and international efforts to promote a fair and sustainable transition to a low carbon global economy and a dramatic increase in clean and renewable energy. These steps will allow the world to stay on track for avoiding a warming of 2 degrees C, the upper limit the global community has agreed is necessary to avoid widespread and devastating impacts from climate change.