

April 13, 2015

The Honorable Lois Capps
2231 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Capps:

The undersigned public health and medical organizations thank you for your ongoing leadership to address the health impacts of climate change through your reintroduction of the Climate Change Health Promotion and Protection Act.

Climate change threatens human health in many ways including extreme heat and weather-related illness and injury, the spread of infectious diseases as well as respiratory illnesses associated with increased pollution and allergens in the air. The third National Climate Assessment, released last May, reaffirmed that climate change is a significant threat to public health. The effects of climate change are being experienced in communities across the country and the world, and different communities and regions will continue to face distinct challenges. Populations already at increased risk from death and disease including people living in poverty, the elderly and young children are also the most susceptible to the health effects of climate change.

Yet, while there is an increased awareness of the public health impacts of climate change by the public health community, according to surveys conducted by the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, many of the nation's health departments surveyed continue to state they lacked the expertise or resources to address climate-related health threats. In addition, many health departments still do not have a strategic plan in place to deal with local health impacts of climate change. Since 2008, health departments have lost more than 51,000 staff and many lack resources to initiate new programs.

Your legislation would help the public health community address the challenges of climate change in several ways. First, it would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a national strategic action plan for addressing the public health impacts of climate change. The bill would also enhance the current level of research on the health impacts of climate change. Importantly, it would prioritize climate change preparedness planning, surveillance, education and training in order to ensure that our already overburdened state and local health systems can adequately address the health impacts of climate change while continuing to respond to other ongoing challenges. Finally, the legislation would allow for the development of programs to educate public health and health care professionals and the public about the health impacts of climate change.

By prioritizing the public health response to climate change, your bill would bolster the capacity of our public health system and help to avoid many preventable illnesses and deaths. Again, we thank you for your continued leadership on this important issue and we look forward to working with you on this and other important public health initiatives in the future.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Psychological Association

Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Allergy & Asthma Network
Center for Climate Change and Health
Children's Environmental Health Network
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
Health Care Without Harm
HealthHIV
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Public Health Institute
Roots of Change
Trust for America's Health