

NATIONAL CLIMATE AND HEALTH LEADERSHIP FORUM 2018

Committing to Climate Action and Advocacy

American Psychological Association, Washington, DC — May 15, 2018



OVERVIEW

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ecoAmerica and Climate for Health convened more than 50 health leaders for the **National Climate and Health Leadership Forum** on May 15, 2018, co-hosted by the American Psychological Association in Washington, D.C. Participants explored ways to increase climate change mitigation and advocacy activities within the health sector, and with health leaders at the forefront of climate solutions beyond the health sector. These discussions revealed several key insights:

- **Climate change is a health emergency** and health professionals have an obligation to talk about it as such with patients, peers, and elected officials at all levels.
- Health professionals are **trusted messengers on climate change and are eager to act**, but need support.
- There is a need for **one national health agenda on climate change around** which health professionals can coalesce.
- There is a desire to build an **inclusive health movement on climate solutions** which will require ongoing opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and support.

“Health professionals must create a proactive, values-based narrative with people’s health and their families at the core, where we define clean energy as a vehicle for achieving health equity.”

OPENING REMARKS



Arthur Evans, PhD
American Psychological Association



Bob Perkowitz
President and Founder of ecoAmerica



Georges Benjamin, MD
American Public Health Association

Dr. Arthur Evans, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President of the American Psychological Association (APA), welcomed participants and confirmed APA's commitment to their climate resolution and mitigation efforts. Two of APA's buildings are LEED certified, one gold and one platinum. While any given political climate may slow action, APA will continue to elevate psychologists' role in addressing climate change impacts to mental health and promoting climate solutions.

State of Health and Climate

ecoAmerica's founder and President, Bob Perkowitz, presented some of the most recent research and polling on climate. The World Economic Forum recognizes that climate change is the biggest risk to the world, with natural disasters in the U.S. costing \$300 billion last year, exceeding the federal budget for health, education, and Medicare combined. With widespread support for clean energy (wind and solar) paired with technological advances, climate advocates have both the public support and economic incentives to achieve a clean energy future now. Leaders are stepping up around the world to realize these goals; 50 nations have committed to 100% clean energy by 2050. Americans trust health leaders for climate information, feel health impacts from climate change, and tie climate action to health benefits. Today, we are here to band together as a coalition of health leaders to make visible commitments so we can lead by example.

Following Bob Perkowitz's remarks, **American Public Health Association's Executive Director, Dr. Georges Benjamin**, spoke to the health sector's potential to address climate change. As part of an energy intensive sector, healthcare leaders have a responsibility to advocate for climate solutions while mitigating our own impact. First, one must do no harm. Health threats from climate impacts include impacts from more frequent and intense hurricanes, storms, and wildfires. This increase in disasters has been paired with reductions in government support for public health, making us less prepared. Health professionals must create a proactive, values-based narrative with people's health and their families at the core, where we define clean energy as a vehicle for achieving health equity. The public understands; they just have to be motivated and activated. We must remind America of Dr. King's teaching of the "fierce urgency of now."

Resources

- [APA's Resolution on Affirming Psychologists' Role in Addressing Global Climate Change](#)
- [APHA's Climate Change Webpage](#)

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND HEALTH EQUITY



From Left:

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
Children's Environmental Health Network

Jerome Paulson, MD
American Academy of Pediatrics

Mark Magaña
Green Latinos

A conversation on why we are compelled to lead on climate, how our leadership matters, and why we need to elevate urgency and collaboration to protect all, particularly the most vulnerable, and work towards health equity.

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN), opened this session with examples of working with the most vulnerable: pregnant women, children, and lower income families to advocate for clean air and water policies. To achieve climate justice, we all must help those most impacted by climate change. Those who contribute the least to energy-generated pollution often suffer the most from its consequences.

Dr. Jerome Paulson, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), built on this narrative with the AAP's story as the first medical professional society to publish a position statement on climate change in 2007. Since then, the Council on Environmental Health has worked to make this a central tenet of the AAP's work. Children breathe and drink more per unit of body weight than adults, magnifying the impacts of pollution in children and putting them at greater risk.

Mark Magaña, Green Latinos, closed the panel by connecting air pollution to the dirty energy sources we are using today. Communities of color and low-income communities are more likely to live closer to these dirty energy facilities. Latino children are 40% more likely to die from asthma, which is why policies like the Clean Power Plan are so important to Latino families. Things we can do now include moving resources and empowering communities, voting, and pushing back on inequitable environmental policies. Panelists agreed that throughout our conversations at the forum and in the work moving forward, we must always seek to achieve climate justice and health equity through clean energy solutions.

Resources

[CEHN Climate Change Policy Statement](#)

[AAP Policy Statement on Climate Change](#)

[Philipsborn RP and Chan K. Climate Change and Global Child Health.](#)

[Pediatrics. 2018;141 \(6\): e20173774](#)

[Green Latinos Climate Change Webpage](#)

After the opening remarks and the framing sessions, the remainder of the forum included panel presentations and interactive discussions.

MITIGATING OUR CLIMATE IMPACT



From Left:

Joel Sigler
Kaiser Permanente

Elizabeth Landau, MS
American Geophysical Union

Barbara Gottlieb
Physicians for Social Responsibility
(representing My Green Doctor)

Concrete examples and success stories from health institutions and organizations that have mitigated their climate impact, including how they navigated barriers to success.

[Joel Sigler, Kaiser Permanente](#)

Healthy communities and a healthy environment are critical to the health and wellness of every person. It is therefore imperative to make climate mitigation part of the healthcare mission. Kaiser Permanente's Environmental Stewardship program is anchored in community benefit work and embedded throughout the organization. Accordingly, Kaiser has aligned climate goals with the mission and vision for total health — emphasizing the social, environmental, behavioral and clinical aspects that shape one's well-being. Kaiser is working towards a carbon net positive goal by 2025. They have invested in offsite solar and wind, reduced the use of anesthetic gases that have a huge warming potential, and are sourcing food locally. To help finance these efforts, they worked closely with their finance team to build a green bonds program.

[Barbara Gottlieb, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Presenting for My Green Doctor](#)

My Green Doctor is a practice management tool for healthcare offices. It is suitable for any outpatient office and used worldwide. This program is designed to be implemented with little cost and little technical background on the part of users because one perceived challenge is that doctors do not have a lot of time to incorporate sustainability into their practices. My Green Doctor provides resources for creating a Green Team, integrating initiatives into management practices, and implementing a sustainability policy. Three elements behind this program are moving the mindset among physicians: 1) real savings, 2) team engagement, and 3) patient health benefits of climate mitigation.

[Elizabeth Landau, American Geophysical Union \(AGU\)](#)

AGU is renovating its offices in Washington, DC to be the first net-zero building in the city, one of the most ambitious retrofitting projects in the world. Climate scientists are members of AGU, and demonstrating strong mitigation is important to them. AGU is using four technologies: reduction (lower energy & water use), reclamation, absorption (recycled water collection), and generation (solar panels), and are innovating as the project progresses. New technologies include a sewer heat transfer system and direct current grids in the building to harness the energy generated by their solar panels. All plans will be made public so others can replicate them. Building renovations will also create a healthier indoor environment, with a hydroponic plant wall that filters the air. While technology has been one challenge, Board approval, staff buy-in, and neighborhood acceptance have been another. Communication and transparency at every step have been key components in making this a successful project.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION: 100% CLEAN ENERGY



From Left:

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
Children's Environmental Health Network

Joel Sigler
Kaiser Permanente

Elizabeth Landau, MS
American Geophysical Union

Barbara Gottlieb
Physicians for Social Responsibility
(representing My Green Doctor)

Bob Perkowitz
President and Founder of ecoAmerica

Frank Loy
Board Chair, ecoAmerica

Building off of speaker inspiration and guidance, all participants will have an immersive discussion on ways to drive commitments to clean energy in our own organizations. We will share ideas, concerns, and opportunities for taking steps towards committing and switching to 100% clean energy.

Discussion Topics from Participants:

- Mitigating our own climate impact improves health
 - Emphasize climate solutions as health imperatives; this is part of the cure
- Achieve buy-in from neighbors, staff, and Board of Directors
- 100% Clean Energy is achievable now
- Disseminate lessons learned
- Encourage innovation
- Provide choices/options for a path forward
 - Meet people where they are
 - Plans should be adaptable
- Educate patients on climate mitigation, and encourage patient advocacy for climate solutions
- Include reduced consumption and efficiency in your mitigation plan
- Diversify the brainstorming stage (engineers, finance team, etc.)
- Address the cost of entry for these projects
- Use cost savings as motivation; do not pass the cost on to your patients
- Normalize the technology to make it more affordable
- Mentor peers to help with implementation in other projects
- Translate this work to rural settings
- Communication is key; messaging will vary depending on the setting
- Start with anchor institutions like hospitals (especially in rural areas)
- People will listen to their doctors more than environmentalists

Resources

[Kaiser Permanente's Webpage on Environmental Stewardship](#)

[My Green Doctor](#)

[American Geophysical Union's Building Construction Webpage](#)

ADVOCACY MATTERS: ELEVATING OUR VOICES FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



From Left:

Katie Huffling, RN, CNM
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Linda Rudolph, MD, MPH
U.S. Climate and Health Alliance

Jack Rayburn, MPH
Trust for America's Health

Advocacy experts share highlights from successful health advocacy efforts, and offer guidance on elevating climate advocacy in 2018 and beyond in ways that are inclusive and non-partisan.

Katie Huffling, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE)

Nurses make up a large portion of the healthcare sector, and are some of the most trusted voices. Nurses are in every community, which means they understand local solutions that cannot always be solved by federal level policy change. Through partnership with ecoAmerica and Climate for Health, five organizations have signed on to the Nursing Collaborative on Climate Change and Health, with several more on the way this year. ANHE has also partnered with Health Care Without Harm to create the Nurses Climate Challenge to create an army of nurses advocating throughout the country on climate.

Jack Rayburn, Trust for America's Health

Trust for America's Health focuses on the social determinants of health framework when approaching policies, programs, and practices to address climate change. Because climate change can be politically polarizing, it is important to frame things as disease prevention and health promotion. Recent priorities include playing defense to protect federal scientific research and research translation programs from austerity cuts, and following the farm bill closely to fend off proposed SNAP benefit cuts and conservation program changes.

Linda Rudolph, U.S. Climate and Health Alliance

Health professionals need to act like climate change is a health emergency, not an ancillary issue. Fighting climate change is not just about energy, but also about transportation, food, agriculture, housing, buildings, and jobs. All of these contribute to existing health inequities, and are exacerbated by climate change. Different specialists in the medical community can speak to specific components of the climate crisis (oncologists or cardiologists talking about meat consumption, diabetes specialist talking about active transit, etc.). Discussions on climate solutions must be inclusive, making sure that marginalized groups are represented. Further, the experience of climate change is largely a local experience and local government is often more accessible than state and federal governments when it comes to lobbying efforts.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION: ADVOCACY



From Left:

Linda Rudolph, MD, MPH
U.S. Climate and Health Alliance

Jack Rayburn, MPH
Trust for America's Health

Edward Maibach, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication

An immersive discussion on ways to elevate climate advocacy and diversify climate constituency. We will share ideas, questions, concerns, and opportunities for advocacy within our associations, institutions, communities, and country.

Discussion Topics from Participants:

- American politics can be a rollercoaster
- It takes a village
- Build momentum in the states; state level advocacy needs to be sustained no matter the federal political climate
- Hope is the single best predictor of recovery after disaster
- We are in a war — comparable to the fight against big tobacco
 - Consider tactics that meet the situation
- Create One National Health Agenda (on climate)
- Be ready for the change that will come
- Address Social Determinants of Health while addressing climate
- Be proactive
- Civics 101 for everyone: How a bill becomes a law
- Make sure to have everyone/perspectives/ideas in the room that we need
- Encourage storytelling — individuals connecting
- Climate change is a health emergency
 - And the fossil fuel industry is causing it — why aren't we saying this part?
- Vilify the enemy; call people out/plain speak in the moment
- Adversity is an opportunity to build commitments and work towards a common goal
- Leverage this moment when people are energized
- Youth engagement; Youth as inspiration (gun violence)
- VOTE — Health professionals need to get involved in GOTV campaigns and voter protection laws

Resources

[Health Impact Assessment](#)

[Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments Climate Change Webpage](#)

[Trust for America's Health Environmental Health Webpage](#)

[U.S. Climate and Health Alliance Advocacy Tools](#)

[Australia's National Strategy for Climate, Health, and Well-Being](#)

[A Declaration on Climate Change and Health](#)

COMMITMENTS TO CLIMATE MITIGATION AND ADVOCACY



From Left:

Leyla McCurdy, MPhil
Director, Climate for Health, ecoAmerica

Jim Whitehead, EdD, MS
American College of Sports Medicine

Sandra Whitehead, PhD
National Environmental Health Association

Jessica Wolff, MSN, MBA
Health Care Without Harm

Lyndsay Moseley Alexander, MPA
American Lung Association

Thoughts, ideas, and examples on how to secure commitments from individuals and organizations, with opportunities to achieve climate mitigation in diverse workplaces and advocate for climate solutions.

Jim Whitehead, American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)

Establishing a common agenda is fundamental for initiating a coalition to achieve collective impact. The climate movement can learn from coalition building in other sectors, including sports and physical activity. For example, the Sports Accord brings international federations together to harness the power of sports to drive social change. ACSM has a philosophical commitment to climate solutions, but needs to translate that intention into real world action. Right now, these considerations are being factored into ACSM's decision to renovate their headquarters or move to a new building to decrease their carbon footprint. The ActivEarth initiative, which considers the nexus of planetary and human health, is also being reinvigorated. Finally, ACSM places a high value on equity and inclusion in climate solutions.

Sandra Whitehead, National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

NEHA has been leading on climate change, with its Board adopting their first climate policy statement in 1999 and updating it in February 2017 with a four-prong strategy: 1) Inspire members to act, 2) Build literacy, 3) Advocacy, and 4) Model behavior. NEHA members are asked to commit to reduce their individual carbon pollution by using public and active transportation, and switching to clean energy. NEHA is creating a shared agenda with affiliates and members to develop tools to measure economic impacts of climate change and sea level rise, enabling them to effectively communicate these impacts to their local and state leaders. NEHA works with their members in more rural communities, who may face further challenges in implementing clean energy goals. Achieving 100% renewable energy is something NEHA is exploring in addition to divestment from fossil fuels.

COMMITMENTS TO CLIMATE MITIGATION AND ADVOCACY



From Left:

Meighen Speiser
Chief Engagement Officer, ecoAmerica

Jim Whitehead, EdD, MS
American College of Sports Medicine

Jessica Wolff, MSN, MBA
Health Care Without Harm

Lyndsay Moseley Alexander, MPA
American Lung Association

Sandra Whitehead, PhD
National Environmental Health Association

Jessica Wolff, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH)

Health Care Without Harm is comprised of a network of 18 domestic health systems representing 500 hospitals committed to: 1) Mitigation, 2) Resilience, and 3) Leadership. These hospitals and health systems pilot climate solutions — tools, trainings, resources, etc. that can then be scaled throughout the network, using influence and purchasing power to move policies. One of HCWH's newest initiatives is the Nurses Climate Challenge to educate and empower nurses to motivate other health professionals on how to take action on climate change. Similarly, the Health Care Climate Challenge helps hospitals navigate some of the internal bureaucracy to make climate commitments. Finally, there is more healthcare can do. When it comes to movements like We Are Still In, there are pillars for cities, counties, universities, and businesses, but not for the health sector.

Lyndsay Alexander, American Lung Association (ALA)

The American Lung Association has an extensive advocacy program, with policy positions on air quality, clean energy, transportation, and lung health. In 2010, ALA's Healthy Air Campaign worked to defend the Affordable Care Act. Applying lessons learned from past campaigns can make the transition to 100% clean energy a success. The policy landscape is very busy, so it is critical to inspire people with the urge and ability to do and feel something and help everyone understand these goals are achievable and easy to implement. Storytelling is an important tool, and affected individuals talking directly to policymakers sends a stronger message than facts alone. Sometimes it's best to get out of the way and let those who are most directly affected tell their own stories.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION: COMMITMENTS

All participants will engage in an immersive discussion on the opportunities for collaboration, how we can best function as a coalition, and how to ready our organizations for participation.

Discussion Topics from Participants:

- Find the common interest and create a shared agenda
- Set the goals and support the journey to achieve them, while making it as easy as possible
- Encourage productive competition
- Build tools for partners who don't have the latitude to talk about climate change
- Diverse partnership perspectives must be reflected in coalition documents
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Give field staff deference and get out of the way
- Availability of clean energy; get involved in more than just the costs
- Membership orgs as a hub for peer to peer learning and associations as influencers
- Walk the walk — TRY to walk the walk — Perfect is the enemy of the good
- Provide technical assistance

Resources

[Health Care Without Harm Climate and Health Webpage](#)

[Nurses Climate Challenge](#)

[NEHA's Climate Change Webpage](#)

[ACSM's ActivEarth Initiative](#)

[ALA Public Policy Positions](#)

CLOSING REMARKS

ecoAmerica has moved from inspire and engage to action — mitigate and advocate. If we want to really make a difference on climate change, we have to stop burning by 2030 and begin to take carbon out of the atmosphere by 2035. We will support each other in making visible commitments, and ecoAmerica and Climate for Health are working on a Moving Forward Guide to help you on this path. Look for additional resources like our monthly talking points and American Climate Perspectives, as well. We can do this!

Additional Resources

Included with the report communications and available upon request

- Agenda
- Participant List
- Path to Positive Vision, Principles, and Commitments
- ecoAmerica Mitigation and Advocacy Overview
- Forum Guide: Preparing for a Robust Discussion
- Draft Roadmap to 100% Clean Energy

Thank you

Thank you to all participants, speakers, supporting organizations, and especially to the American Psychological Association for hosting us. We look forward to ongoing collaboration as we increase climate mitigation and advocacy efforts in 2018 and beyond.

For more information about Climate for Health, contact:
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