

December 14, 2011

The Honorable Lois Capps
1110 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Capps:

The undersigned public health and medical organizations thank you for your leadership in re-introducing the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Climate change is expected to worsen many health problems, including heat and other weather-related illness and injury, infectious diseases as well as respiratory illnesses associated with pollution and allergens in the air. 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 such as communities of color, the elderly, young children, are also the most susceptible to the health effects of climate change.

Yet, according to a 2008 national survey conducted by the Environmental Defense Fund and National Association of County and City Health Officials, 77 percent of local health directors surveyed felt they lacked resources to address climate-related health threats. At the state government level, a 2009 Association of State and Territorial Health Officials survey revealed that most state health officials have identified significant gaps in funding, staffing and training to adequately deal with the challenges of climate change.

Your legislation begins to address the challenges faced by the public health community 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. Your bill would also enhance the current level of research on the health impacts of climate change. The bill 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

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Center for Public Health and Climate Change
Children's Environmental Health Network
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Environmental Health Association
Public Health Institute
Trust for America's Health