

31th National Black Nurses' Day on Capitol Hill
Theme: "Addressing the Epidemic of Health Inequity: NBNA's Call to Action"

Climate Change and Environmental Justice

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) supports comprehensive efforts to endorse action to address climate change through equitable initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare communities for unavoidable changes leading to reduction of climate-related health effects. NBNA calls on the 116th Congress to also support clean air and water protections and initiatives that support healthy environments and people. Moreover, the most at-risk populations are children, elderly, low-income, and minorities and disproportionately impacts the physical, mental and social well-being of Black communities.

Background:

- Human-caused climate change creates significant risks to human health including:
 - Deterioration of air quality (particularly particle matter and ozone pollution) from more intense wildfires and hotter temperatures. Poor air quality contributes to worsening new and existing cases of asthma, increases in allergens and allergy symptoms, aggravation of chronic lung and cardiac diseases, and premature death.
 - More extreme heat days and heat waves will increase the likelihood of temperature-related illness.¹
 - Increased risk of diseases carried by insects (e.g. dengue fever, Zika, malaria, Lyme disease) from rising temperatures and changes in precipitation.¹
 - More intense and severe droughts and heavier periods of precipitation, rising sea levels, and severe storm surges that contribute to flooding can impact water quality and food supply, increasing potential for water and food-related illnesses.¹
 - Stress-related and mental health impacts from community disruption and extreme weather events.¹
- Climate change exacerbates existing health inequities and disproportionately impacts certain populations, including children, older adults, those with chronic health conditions, some communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous peoples.²

Recommendations to Legislators:

- NBNA opposes restricting or amending Clean Air Act authority.
- NBNA supports at least level funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement and enforce environmental health protections. NBNA opposes inclusion of anti-health riders in appropriations bills.
- NBNA supports the need for health protective EPA regulations that work towards addressing climate change or climate-related impacts. **NBNA opposes efforts to:**
 - Weaken or eliminate the Clean Water Rule.
 - Weaken the clean car standards.
 - Weaken standards that regulate methane pollution from oil and gas operations/production.
 - Repeal the Clean Power Plan and weaken carbon emission standards from power plants.
- NBNA supports the inclusion of nurses to serve as spokespersons on climate change and environmental justice related health issues.

References

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2018) Summary for Policymakers. In: Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, H. O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P. R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J. B. R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M. I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, T. Waterfield (eds.)]. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 32 pp
2. USGCRP, 2018: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II: Report-in-Brief [Reidmiller, D.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock, and B.C. Stewart (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 186 pp.
- 3 Watts, N., Amann, M., Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Belesova, K., Bouley, T., Boykoff, M., ... Byass, P. (2017). The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: From 25 years of inaction to a global Transformation for public health. *The Lancet*, 391, 581-560.