

VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

Reducing Carbon Pollution Emissions in Vermont

Submitted by David Rand, DO, MPH, Susan Leigh Deppe, MD, DFAPA, Michael Latreille, MD, Jon Ford, PA-C for adoption at VMS Annual Meeting on November 2, 2019

WHEREAS, In 2017, the Vermont Medical Society joined other Vermont medical and health organizations, and hundreds of individual Vermont medical and health professionals, in signing a letter to the Legislature stating that “given current fossil fuel consumption trajectories, climate change will become the major threat to human health in the 21st century”; and

WHEREAS, The World Health Organization has declared the carbon pollution to be “the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century”;[1] and

WHEREAS, More than 110 United States national and state medical and health organizations, including the American College of Emergency Physicians, American Medical Association, American College of Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American Academy of Family Physicians, recently declared climate change to be “a true public health emergency”;[2] and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has predicted severe health risks to all Americans including accelerating rates of respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, vector-borne disease, water-borne disease, heat-related illness, and injuries/fatalities associated with severe weather events and wildfires. If the crisis persists unabated, the CDC also predicts systemic water/food supply disruptions, large scale migration, and other catastrophic societal impacts. In addition, the CDC and other public health entities are highly concerned about rising mental illness associated with this deepening crisis;[3] and

WHEREAS, As documented by both Federal and state agencies, severe impacts of climate change are already occurring across the United States;[4] and

WHEREAS, The Vermont Department of Public Health has documented effects already impacting Vermonters’ health including: the rise of vector-borne disease; increasing exposure to cyanobacteria; rising illness/death due to extreme weather events; increasing exposure to waterborne illness (e.g., from untreated sewage discharges resulting from frequent heavy rain events) and similar;[5] and

WHEREAS, Those whose health is at particularly high near-term risk include the most vulnerable Vermonters (e.g., children, the elderly, those with chronic illness, low- income families, the homeless and those living in flood plains); and

WHEREAS, The Vermont Department of Health finds that “Responding to climate change will benefit health now. Reducing the risk of climate-related health impacts requires immediate action. The more greenhouse gases are emitted into the atmosphere, the more we can expect the planet to warm, resulting in increasingly more severe extreme weather and health impacts. Actions need to be taken now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the planet’s ability to absorb greenhouse gases, improve community resilience to climate impacts, and address vulnerabilities to health risks;”[6] and

WHEREAS, Existing climate action initiatives have already demonstrated significant health benefits and financial savings for Vermonters, including:

- 53 • In 2017 Abt Associates found that the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – a multistate
54 carbon pricing program for the electric sector that Vermont is a member of – has prevented
55 over 300 early deaths among adults and saved \$5.7 billion in health costs in the last ten
56 years;[7] and
57
- 58 • The Vermont Department of Health has estimated that the 10-year value of energy and health
59 benefits of a \$8,500 weatherization project is at least \$24,757 per household, or about three
60 times the initial cost;[8] and
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62 WHEREAS, Despite commitments otherwise in statute, the Vermont Agency of Natural
63 Resources has documented that the emission of greenhouse gas emissions in Vermont has risen
64 by 16% since 1990, with 43% of that total attributed to the transportation sector and 24%
65 attributed to residential/commercial consumption of fossil fuels;[9] now therefore be it
66

67 **RESOLVED, the Vermont Medical Society strongly urges Vermont policy makers at all**
68 **levels of governance to act immediately to protect the health of Vermonters by**
69 **advancing policies which will significantly reduce Vermont’s carbon pollution, while**
70 **protecting the health and financial well-being of vulnerable Vermonters. In particular:**

- 71 - **Policies that will dramatically reduce the use of fossil fuels in Vermont’s**
72 **transportation sector, including large scale investment in electric vehicle**
73 **charging infrastructure, and advancing the availability and use of public**
74 **transportation.**
- 75 - **Policies that will dramatically reduce the use of fossil fuels in Vermont’s**
76 **residential/commercial sector, including significant and sustained increases in**
77 **policies and programs designed to make existing and new buildings more energy**
78 **efficient, and to promote switching from fossil fuel powered equipment and**
79 **systems to equipment and systems powered by renewable energy.**
- 80 - **Cross-cutting policies that will significantly reduce the consumption of fossil**
81 **fuels by Vermonters in multiple sectors of the economy, while creating economic**
82 **opportunity as the new energy economy accelerates, such as well-designed**
83 **progressive carbon pricing strategies, and legislation that obligates state**
84 **government to ensure Vermont meets greenhouse gas emissions in statute.**
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86 [1] See www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/

87 [2] See climatehealthaction.org/cta/climate-health-equity-policy/

88 [3] See www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm

89 [4] For example, see www.forbes.com/sites/jenniferhicks/2018/11/27/this-new-documentary-paris-to-pittsburgh-makes-climate-change-local/#9bb7fb149702

91 [5] See www.healthvermont.gov/environment/climate

92 [6] See www.healthvermont.gov/environment/climate/take-action

93 [7] See www.abtassociates.com/rggi

94 [8] See www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ENV_CH_WxHealthReport.pdf

95 [9] See dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/aqc/climate-change/documents/Vermont_Greenhouse_Gas_Emissions_Inventory_Update_1990-2015.pdf
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