



May 19, 2021

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In 2020, our health care systems faced the challenges of both a global pandemic and the growing infrastructure and health impacts from climate change. As leaders of 18 U.S. health care systems with hospitals in 34 states, we are seeing these impacts firsthand, challenging our ability to deliver care and harming the health and livelihoods of our patients and communities, especially the most vulnerable.

There are common solutions to address these crises and the administration can take immediate action to support the nation's economic recovery while simultaneously building a more resilient health care system, mitigating the carbon footprint of health care operations, ensuring all communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change, and addressing the health and economic disparities in our society.

Tremendous opportunities exist for health care to decarbonize and drive community resilience. Health care is both a major contributor to climate pollution - responsible for 8.5% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions - and is at the center of responding to the health impacts of climate change. Health care systems are often among the largest employers and real estate owners in communities, and the largest purchaser of goods and services. Health care systems can leverage their purchasing power, 18% of U.S. GDP, to transform markets, decarbonize supply chains, and spur economy-wide change.

The American Jobs Plan outlines investments of more than \$2 trillion over the next eight years in essential infrastructure and clean energy investments that can benefit health care systems while ensuring cleaner, more resilient and more equitable communities. We applaud the targeting of 40 percent of these investments toward disadvantaged communities. We specifically support the provisions related to increasing resilience in essential services including community health and hospitals, clean energy tax incentives and the direct pay option, energy efficiency and electrification of buildings, electric vehicle charging, and the modernization of VA health facilities.

We recommend two key areas for investment in health care decarbonization and climate resilience to achieve the transformation of the sector. Tribal, territorial, safety net, and rural hospitals should be prioritized for these investments as they support the most vulnerable communities.

1) Provide funding, tax incentives, and financing that nonprofit health care facilities can use to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and invest in clean energy and resilience.

- *Clean Electricity*: Provide long-term tax incentive extensions and expansions with an expanded direct pay option for the duration of the underlying credit extensions, such that non-profit health care systems can access their full value, for new clean electricity generation, transmission and energy storage capacity.
- *Zero-Emission Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure*: Include funds for health care systems to transform their fleets and install charging stations at their facilities.
- *Thermal Energy Decarbonization in Hospitals*: Fund R&D and pilot projects to address the decarbonization of the large thermal loads in hospitals (including, but not limited to, electrification, geothermal, green hydrogen) in ways that also advances facility and community resilience, including decarbonizing emergency power sources during electric outages.

2) Provide technical assistance and financial support to help hospitals, health care professionals, first responders, and communities develop climate preparedness and response plans.

- *Hill-Burton Program in Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)*: Fund this program at \$2 billion/year over five years for climate-resilient hospital infrastructure with targeted assistance to speed recovery from and prepare for extreme weather events, install energy efficiency retrofits, and implement clean microgrid systems with energy storage to improve system-wide resilience.
- *Increase funding for the HHS ASPR Hospital Preparedness Program*:
 - i) Support pre-disaster hospital and health facility resilience projects, including retrofits and maintenance to reduce flood and wildfire risk, harden facilities against extreme weather, and integrate redundant water and power supplies, including microgrids and community renewable energy grids, where applicable, to enhance resilience and access to water and energy when certain portions of the grid are disabled.
 - ii) Support hospitals and other critical health facilities to prepare emergency plans that address increasing climate-related risks, including provisions to ensure reliable power and water supplies during disasters.

Finally, the linchpin to ensuring a climate-smart health care sector is the full engagement and accountability of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in building a resilient, low-carbon health care system. There are numerous essential roles for HHS in tackling the climate emergency. The agency needs to develop a comprehensive national strategic action plan to address the physical and operational risks from climate change to public health systems and health care facilities, and to assist communities, public health departments, and safety net and rural hospitals in preparing for and responding to the public health risks of the climate crisis, including mental health and food



insecurity. This plan needs to encompass a national health care decarbonization strategy in line with our nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement and the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as track the health sector's progress towards achieving emission reductions.

If we do not act quickly, climate change threatens to undo the greatest public health achievements of the twentieth century and disrupt health care operations across the country. Health care has both a moral responsibility and a unique opportunity to reduce our own carbon footprint and invest in healthy, resilient communities for all. With the right investments, the sector is poised to play a leading role in promoting equitable and healthy climate solutions.

Sincerely,

The U.S. Health Care Climate Council

The [U.S. Health Care Climate Council](#) is a leadership body of 18 health systems committed to protecting our patients and employees from the health impacts of climate change and becoming anchors for resilient communities. Health Care Climate Council members implement innovative climate solutions, inspire and support others to act, and use our trusted voice and purchasing power to move policy and markets to drive the transformation to climate-smart health care.

Climate Council members represent:

- 500 hospitals in 34 states
- 50 million patients served annually
- 800,000 employees
- Over \$200 billion in annual operating revenue

Cc: Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy