



January 31, 2022

Dear Members of Congress:

Climate change is one of the greatest public health threats of our time. As the frontline stewards of patient and community health, health care systems have a unique opportunity and responsibility to prepare our facilities and communities for the impacts of climate change. In 2020 and 2021, we faced the challenges of both a global pandemic and the growing infrastructure and health effects from climate-fueled weather events. As leaders of 18 U.S. health care systems with hospitals in 41 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.

Congress must seize this moment to make major investments in climate and health solutions. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is an important and positive step, it is not sufficient to achieve our nation's climate mitigation and resilience goals. In addition to the IIJA, we believe it is critical to pass the climate and health solutions in the Build Back Better budget reconciliation package that includes important investments to ensure the U.S. can meet its climate goals to reduce emissions by 50-52 percent by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. We agree with the [American Hospital Association](#) that, "The bill includes significant funding for investments in clean energy and sustainability programs that have the potential to benefit hospitals and health systems and the communities they serve." This full suite of climate investments will aid in building a more resilient health care system, mitigating the carbon footprint of health care operations, and supporting all communities as they seek to become resilient to the impacts of climate change, while simultaneously helping to address the health and economic disparities in our society.

Climate related disasters leave health care facilities vulnerable to suspended services, postponed procedures, evacuation orders, an inability to treat patients, and closure causing massive economic and human disruption. [Extreme weather and wildfires have been especially devastating](#) in the last two years with the United States experiencing 42 weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each that resulted in the deaths of 950 people and over \$245 billion in damages. A [sample of just 10 climate-sensitive events](#) in the U.S. had an estimated \$10 billion in health-related costs, with mortality costs (\$8.4 billion) exceeding illness costs and lost wages (\$1.6 billion combined).

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 crises caused by 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.



The Build Back Better package includes essential climate investments over the next ten years in clean energy and resilience that can benefit health care systems and the health of those we serve while ensuring cleaner, more resilient, and more equitable communities. We support the provisions that invest in community resilience and health, expand and extend clean energy and transportation tax incentives that include a full direct pay¹ option, strengthen transmission and electric grid resilience, provide clean and widely available public transportation options especially for underserved communities, improve energy efficiency and electrification of buildings, and support electric vehicles charging infrastructure in communities nationwide.

As the primary sector with a healing mission and as guardians of community health, we are committed to leading the way. Our health systems and hospitals have all joined the [Health Care Climate Challenge](#) and have set the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals in the sector to protect the 74 million patients we serve annually and our broader communities from the health impacts of climate change. We have found that our strong commitments to [climate-smart health care](#) have yielded significant return on investment in terms of financial savings, employee retention and satisfaction, and improvements in community health.

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. 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 19 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. The Climate Council health systems represent over 6,800 hospitals and health centers in 41 states, with 1 million employees serving over 74 million patients annually.

¹ Also called refundable tax credits, this allows the recipient to monetize the credit regardless of how much they owe in taxes, allowing non-profit health systems to more fully use and benefit from it.