



#### **Background:**

Climate change and the burning of fossil fuels is currently causing harmful effects on human health and wellness as a result of: heat related illness, increases in natural disasters, increased suitability for transmission of infectious diseases, air pollution, food insecurity and undernutrition, economic losses, atopic disease, psychological stress, and harmful effects on social determinants of health<sup>2,3,4,7,10</sup>. In 2016, it is estimated that air pollution led to over 64,000 premature deaths in the United States and 7 million premature deaths globally<sup>3,10</sup>. Those impacts are expected to worsen due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions with disproportionate harms affecting children, elderly, racial minorities, rural populations, people with chronic medical conditions, and economically disadvantaged populations<sup>7,8,10,12</sup>. From the 5th Assessment Report of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is clear that climate change is caused by anthropogenic increases in greenhouse gas emissions and other anthropogenic climate forcings; and, given that global greenhouse gas emissions are rising, the most well established policies for significant emissions reductions by 2030 and a carbon neutral economy by 2050 may not be ambitious enough to limit global temperature increases to 2°C above pre-industrial levels<sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately, significant detrimental impacts on human health come as a result of operations of the healthcare industry. If the US healthcare sector were itself a country, it would be ranked 13th globally for total greenhouse gas emissions, despite physicians having an ethical obligation to advocate for reduction of environmental impacts that worsen human health<sup>5,6</sup>.

Climate change is a health emergency, and a call for equitable climate mitigation and adaptation via the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health, and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda is already supported by at least 125 healthcare organizations. Many of these supporting organizations are well-known and respected within Wisconsin and the United States to include: Physicians for Social Responsibility - Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Global Health Institute, Wisconsin Environmental Health Network, Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action, Wisconsin Public Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians, American Heart Association, and American Lung Association<sup>8,9</sup>.

Lastly, the goals for optimal child health established by the mission and vision of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>11</sup> is congruent with equitable mitigation and adaptation to climate change.



## Climate Change and Child Health

### Position:

The Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WIAAP) recognizes that climate change is a public health emergency that is harming the health and well being of the patients we serve. The WIAAP aims to prevent the worsening of those harms by:

- Improving internal operations of the WIAAP to decrease our environmental impact.
- Supporting efforts made by Wisconsin healthcare systems to decrease environmental impact.
- Advocating for research-based, equitable climate change mitigation and adaptation policies in the public and private sector.
- Educating students, healthcare professionals, and patients about the effects of climate change on child health.
- Supporting interdisciplinary coalitions that aim to achieve equitable climate mitigation and adaptation solutions.
- Creating the position of an Environmental Health Climate Advocate within the WIAAP to aid in achieving the aforementioned goals.

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