

# Guide for 'U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda Op-Eds

## Guidance

The following is intended to serve as a guide to help you develop tailored 600-800 word op-eds around the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda. You can see that document at [www.climatehealthaction.org](http://www.climatehealthaction.org).

The guidance below will assist you in integrating key messages from the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda into your op-ed. It also includes specific messaging you can use to highlight local trends and call on leaders in government, business and the social sector, as well as members of Congress, to confront climate change as a public health emergency. In addition, you should also consider incorporating an anecdote around your firsthand experience working with patients to help put a human face on the issue.

We encourage you to use this guidance to submit and place an op-ed around the Climate, Health and Equity Policy Action Agenda in your local paper. For tracking purposes, please forward your published op-eds to Nick Seaver at [nseaver@burness.com](mailto:nseaver@burness.com).

## Key Messaging Points

Note: these are intended to be a starting point. **You don't need to include every message; prioritize the pieces that are most relevant for your organization and/or the author. Since we hope to focus attention on the solutions we are putting forward, the first two Roman numerals below should take up only one fourth of your op-ed.**

### I. **Climate Change is Harming Health**

- Climate change is creating a public health emergency. Unless our nation's leaders respond with urgency, health harms will dramatically increase as climate change worsens.
- Choose one of the following:
  - Extreme heat, powerful storms and floods, year-round wildfires, droughts and other climate-related events have already taken too many lives and displaced tens of thousands of people in the U.S. from their homes, including here in [STATE] (if applicable).
  - People are experiencing heat illness, worsening respiratory conditions like asthma, declining mental health, and infectious and insect-borne diseases – all health impacts that are directly related to impacts of climate change, like increased air pollution, water contamination and longer, hotter heat waves.
- Climate change threatens the very foundations of what we need to thrive: clean air, clean water, nutritious food for all and vibrant communities.

- In [STATE], we are already seeing [insert local statistic on displaced residents, agricultural, food and water system failure, and/or mortalities from poor air or water quality].

## **II. *Climate Change Harms Everyone, but Especially Vulnerable Communities***

- While the health and well-being of all Americans is at risk, the [health impacts of climate change are not evenly shared](#). Many of the most vulnerable people in the U.S. -- including pregnant women, children, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses, outdoor workers, and people in low-income communities and communities of color -- are most at risk.
  - If you are submitting to a local paper, incorporate localized data. For the examples below, you can find your county's total numbers of children with asthma, adults with asthma, people over 65, people with COPD, and people with cardiovascular disease at [www.lung.org/sota](http://www.lung.org/sota). Select your state and select "groups at risk" for a county-by-county listing.
    - Children, who face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are still developing and because they are often more active outdoors.
      - [COUNTY]'s more than [NUMBER] children are especially vulnerable.
    - The elderly, who are at higher risk of health problems from the impact of climate change.
      - In [COUNTY], there are [NUMBER] of elderly people, all of whom deserve protection from the harms of climate change.
    - People with chronic illness, who also risk greater harm from the impacts of climate change.
      - In [COUNTY], there are currently [NUMBER] people with [asthma/COPD/Lung cancer/cardiovascular disease], which means they face greater risk.
  - Policies that help reduce climate change will directly benefit the health of people in these communities, who must be engaged in full partnership to shape solutions that will build a healthy and climate-resilient future.

## **III. *U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda***

- Policy choices our leaders make today will determine the magnitude of the health harms caused by climate change on future generations. The health sector is taking action to promote and protect health in the era of climate change, but we cannot do it alone.
- The [Climate, Health and Equity Policy Action Agenda](#), endorsed by 74 organizations representing more than half a million doctors, nurses, health systems, public health professionals, and patients, provides a roadmap for local, state and national leaders to act now to stop climate pollution, promote resilient communities, and support the health of all Americans.

***IV. Your Call to Action: Our nation's leaders in government, business and the social sector need to recognize climate change as a health emergency and take steps to combat it***

- To protect human health from the harms of climate change, I/we call on our nation's leaders in government, business and the civil sector, including [if this is not written on behalf of a specific tax exempt 501C3 you have the option of INSERTing specific ELECTED OFFICIALS by position or even by name] here in [STATE], to heed the urgent call of health professionals and health organizations and immediately take steps to limit climate disruption and build climate resilience.
  - We call on our leaders to prioritize health outcomes in climate policy solutions at all levels of government, business and the social sector.
  - We urge our leaders to support policies that strengthen commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transition rapidly away from the use of coal, oil and natural gas, and transition to zero-carbon transportation systems. Maximize the energy savings that are available by improving energy efficiency.
  - Move to sustainable farms and food systems including best soil health to achieve maximum carbon sequestration, and ensure that everyone has access to safe drinking water.
- Action taken now can and will help prevent the worst impacts of climate change, have a direct impact on our most vulnerable communities, and protect the health of all families. We cannot wait any longer.