



Carolina Advocates *for Climate, Health, and Equity*

Dear North Carolina Health System Leader,

Together with the undersigned individuals and organizations, Carolina Advocates for Climate, Health, and Equity (CACHE) requests that your health system join hospitals and health systems throughout the United States and North Carolina in taking bold climate action to improve health, equity and resilience. **The health care sector is responsible for [8.5-10% of heat-trapping greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions in the U.S.](#), and a similar proportion of air pollution, contributing significantly to climate disruption and to the associated impacts on public health and health disparities.**

Our patients experience the adverse health effects of a disturbed climate, along with injuries, illness, and mental health impacts related to extreme weather events. As we have seen here at home and across the nation, these events can severely disrupt health care access, delivery and supply chains. Health sector-generated air pollution is a form of institutional racism that contributes to the significant burden of chronic cardiovascular and respiratory disease, cancer, and adverse pregnancy outcomes that disproportionately impact racialized populations and [contribute to health inequities](#). We, as health professionals and community-rooted organizations advancing social justice and health equity, provide patient care and community support to address the downstream effects of climate and air pollution. However, achieving health equity will require collaboration with our health systems to target upstream drivers of health disparities, including environmental determinants of health, and to build climate resilience in the communities they serve.

In April 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in partnership with The White House, issued a [call to action](#) for the health care sector to commit to sustainability. HHS asked U.S. health care institutions to sign the voluntary [Health Sector Climate Pledge](#), commit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and plan for climate resilience to protect the communities they serve. More than 800 public and private hospitals have signed, including Atrium Health in North Carolina. Certainly, climate damage and air pollution cannot be addressed by health sector action alone; it will require improvements in the energy and transportation sectors to succeed. Nevertheless, as we have experienced with Zero Preventable Harm initiatives and the health sector's response to the COVID pandemic, rapid innovation and improvements in patient outcomes are possible, and start with an operational commitment to patient safety. **Notably, institutions that have enacted sustainability measures have found**

they decrease costs, increase employee satisfaction and retention, and help organizations achieve their mission to improve the health of their communities.

The pledge asks hospitals and health systems to:

1. Reduce their organization's emissions 50% by 2030 and to net zero by 2050
2. Designate an executive lead ("Green Champion") for environmental sustainability by 2023
3. Develop climate resilience plans for their facilities and communities by the end of 2023
4. Complete an inventory of supply chain emissions by the end of 2024
5. Publicly report progress on an annual basis.

We applaud the commitment our NC health systems have made to address institutional racism and to achieve health equity. **For the health of communities we serve, we ask you to sign the [HHS Health Sector Climate Pledge](#).** We welcome a dialogue about how we can support you in making environmental justice leadership and climate resilience an organizational priority. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Shapley-Quinn
Executive Director, Carolina Advocates for Climate, Health, and Equity
<https://www.nccliniciansforclimate.org/>

CACHE comprises healthcare providers and public health professionals across all regions of North Carolina. We are the state affiliate of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health whose mission is to "*mobilize and amplify the voices of U.S. doctors, in partnership with public health experts and fellow health professionals, to successfully advocate for equitable climate solutions that protect and promote the health of all people.*"