



*Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action*

## **Statement on Legislative Budget Restrictions Pertaining to Virginia Carbon Reduction Efforts**

On behalf of over 300 doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and students across our state, Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action expresses great disappointment in the process that has resulted in significant restrictions on Virginia's ability to reduce carbon emissions by participating in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

Rising carbon dioxide concentrations and resulting climate change pose significant risks to human health from extreme weather events, heat illness, air pollution related respiratory problems including asthma, allergies, food and water contamination and infectious diseases. These effects are felt disproportionately in vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly and the disadvantaged.

Reductions in air pollution in the nine states currently participating in RGGI have resulted in major public health benefits and between \$3 billion and \$8 billion in health cost savings. A five-year study of public health benefits among states that participate in RGGI found that reduced air pollution resulted in the avoidance of hundreds of heart attacks and premature deaths and thousands of asthma exacerbations.

The decision by the General Assembly to pass a budget which included provisions that restrict Virginia's ability to join RGGI and the subsequent decision by Governor Northam not to veto this provision will delay the public health benefits which would result for all Virginians.

As clinicians committed to protecting the health of our patients and communities in the Commonwealth, we will continue to advocate for policies which reduce carbon emissions and improve public health by acting boldly against climate change.