



Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action Supports Virginia's Revised Plan to Reduce and Cap Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Fossil Fuel Fired Electric Power Generating Facilities

On behalf of over 300 doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and students across our state, Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action supports the revised proposal to reduce and cap carbon dioxide emissions in Virginia.

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

The health of Virginians is being harmed by climate change today and effects are expected to become more apparent as the climate continues to warm. Research done by the Science Museum of Virginia shows that healthcare visits for heat illness in Virginia increase dramatically when the temperature rises above 95 degrees. According NOAA Regional Climate Centers data, Richmond has five more days above 95 degrees today than in the 1970's, placing more Virginians at risk of heat illness. Virginia Department of Health statistics document that between May and September of 2018, 2,723 Virginians were treated in an Emergency Room or Urgent Care for heat illness.

Warming temperatures are creating more favorable conditions for some infectious disease causing pathogens and their vectors, including mosquitos and ticks. There has also been a shift in plant blooming time, affecting air quality, allergies and asthma attacks. Allergy Partners Richmond documents that the peak tree pollen count in Richmond now arrives one week earlier and is 50% higher than in the 1980's.

Clinicians throughout Virginia support reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Commonwealth to avert further climate warming that threatens Virginians health and safety. The revised proposal reduces the initial 2020 cap from 33-34 million tons per year to 28 million tons. This significant reduction will protect Virginians through reduced heat-trapping emissions and warming. In addition, it will further reduce other noxious air pollutants. Reductions in air pollution in the nine Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) participating states 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.

Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action applauds Governor Northam and the Department of Environmental Quality for moving the Commonwealth towards a cleaner and healthier future for its citizens with this revised proposal.