



December 9, 2022

Governor-elect Maura Healey  
Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St.  
Office of the Governor, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

As physicians, nurses, and public health professionals, Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, Climate Code Blue, and Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments members see the health harms that result from fossil-fuel driven climate change and air pollution every day. These include (but are not limited to) cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses; infectious diseases; pregnancy complications; and mental health consequences.

As you have said many times as Attorney General, these harms fall disproportionately on low-income communities, persons with pre-existing health problems, pregnant women, and children. Preventing the health consequences of climate change requires urgent and bold action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The stakes could not be higher. Over 100 medical and public health organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Nursing, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Public Health Association have declared the climate crisis a health emergency — an emergency that dwarfs all others. The UN Secretary General echoed our urgent declaration, calling the climate crisis, “a code red for humanity.”

We must avert the worst of the crisis and seize the opportunity to make Massachusetts a healthier, safer, thriving place to live, work, play, and go to school. By centering climate and health, the Commonwealth can improve air and water quality, expand affordable and safe housing, and reach the climate goals outlined in the *Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap*.

The work ahead will not be easy, as you well know from your lawsuit against Exxon Mobil for deceptive advertising practices. According to a recent report by Brown University,<sup>1</sup> despite widespread support for climate action, powerful industry lobbyists from gas utilities, gas companies, and real estate agencies and their trade groups have stopped or slowed the necessary changes to meet the climate crisis. These same people will soon be at your door, and prioritizing the health and safety of our residents over this powerful lobby will be critically important.

Safeguarding the health of residents of the Commonwealth requires a rapid reduction in emissions causing climate change and air pollution. We ask for your leadership in developing and enforcing policies that:

**1. Center equity.** Prioritize the health and safety of environmental justice communities and vulnerable populations, like pregnant women, children and the elderly. Invest in safe, pollution-free public transportation and affordable housing, clean water, education, and well-paid, green jobs.

**2. Transition away from polluting fuels to renewable energy and storage.** New “natural” gas infrastructure, including pipelines, compressor stations, and peaker plants must be halted immediately. Replace gas infrastructure with clean, pollution-free energy and storage, and transition quickly to electric infrastructure for transport and buildings. Assist public utilities with developing new business models that transition away from heating buildings with natural gas, biomass, and other polluting fuels like so-called renewable natural gas and fossil-fuel-derived hydrogen.

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<sup>1</sup> The Climate and Development Lab, Institute at Brown for Environment and Society. *Who's Delaying Climate Action in Massachusetts? Twelve Findings Policy Briefing*. January 2021. <https://ibes.brown.edu/sites/default/files/MA-CSSN-Report-1.20.2021-Corrected-text.pdf>

**3. Preserve and enhance natural ecosystems.** Preserve mature trees, reduce deforestation and invest in reforestation, ecosystem restoration, and carbon-storing agriculture and soil management. Thriving ecosystems are essential to protect biodiversity, natural watersheds, and manage climate risks.

**4. Prioritize addressing the climate crisis in all executive agencies and programs.** Facilitate cooperation across executive agencies to address climate change and appoint people committed to addressing the climate crisis, environmental justice, and health inequities.

Your adoption of these approaches is fundamental to protecting the health of residents of the Commonwealth. Please know that we are available to support your administration in any way to implement these aggressive and necessary climate goals.

Sincerely,

Brita Lundberg, MD, Chair of the Board,  
Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility

Caren Solomon, MD, MPH  
Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School  
On Behalf of Climate Code Blue

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