



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

POLICY STATEMENT on the CLIMATE AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

January 2020

The Oregon Pediatric Society, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), stands with the worldwide scientific community in support of regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is a public health emergency, posing major threats to human health, safety, and longevity. Children are uniquely vulnerable and face the worst of these consequences.

Compared with adults, kids are more sensitive to heat stroke. Children breathe faster and have more exposure to their environment relative to their size. In addition, children's developing lungs are more sensitive to toxic exposures. As temperatures rise and increased wildfires fill the air with particulates, the polluted air causes greater harm to a child than to her nearby parent.

Shorter winters mean longer allergy seasons, worsening seasonal allergies, and allergy-related asthma attacks. Catastrophic storm systems are displacing families and polluting waterways. Droughts are harming farmers and ranchers creating food, water, and nutrient insecurity in vulnerable regions. As climate change progresses, so too does climate anxiety and the trauma of community instability, global migrations, and increased conflict.

These climate effects are not theoretical. They are happening now. In November 2015, the AAP Policy Statement on Climate Change stated that given our knowledge, failure to take prompt, substantive action is an act of injustice to all children. A paradigm shift in production and consumption of energy is both a necessity and an opportunity for major innovation, job creation, and significant, immediate associated health benefits.

Since the demise of the Oregon Clean Energy Jobs bill in the 2019 state legislative session,

- the world had its hottest month on record last July and its second warmest annual average temperature;
- Greta Thunberg, a teenager from Sweden, spoke at the United Nations Climate Change Summit and helped to ignite a worldwide upswell of climate activism;
- school children across Oregon left classes to march for climate justice.

In short, while the Oregon legislature failed to act, the climate crisis worsened, the world took notice, and the urgency to intervene intensified.

Oregon has another chance in 2020 to be a leader on climate justice, to protect the health of our children now, and to preserve a livable planet for our children's future. We recognize that our window of opportunity to avoid the worst and irreversible effects of climate change, and to therefore protect our children's health and future prospects for all species, is rapidly closing. While the federal government backtracks on environmental protections, we call on Oregon lawmakers to lead the way and pass a strong bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.