



April 12, 2013

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change
Ranking member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Request for Comments on Draft Carbon-Pricing Legislation

Dear Representative Waxman and Senator Whitehouse:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), we are pleased to submit comments on the legislative discussion draft you released on March 12, 2013 entitled "Fee for Emissions of Carbon Pollution." As a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority, we applaud your efforts to promote serious discussion regarding steps this nation can take to address the growing dangers of climate change.

We need not convince you of the reality of extreme weather and climate change. Moreover, because our health is so entwined with our environment, these human-induced climate changes pose serious and costly new challenges for human health. Increased heat-related death and sickness, increased air pollution and aggravation of asthma, increased food, water, and vector-borne disease, malnutrition, and an increase in the frequency of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires and landslides that have negative impacts on both physical and mental health are all among the health impacts of climate change.

For example, a research study estimated that in 2020 New York City regions could see a 5.2 percent to 10.2 percent increases in children emergency room visits for summer ozone-related asthma due to the effects of climate change.¹ Another study concluded that six climate change-related events, that struck our nation between 2000 and 2009, accounted for about \$14 billion in

¹ Sheffield, P.E., J.L. Carr, P.L. Kinney, K. Knowlton. Modeling of regional climate change effects on ground-level ozone and childhood asthma. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* Sept. 2011. 41(3): 251-257. (online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3160600/>).

lives lost and health cost, of which \$740 million was spent addressing illness and injuries.² These events include our nation's ozone air pollution from 2000-2002, California's 2006 heat wave, Florida's 2004 hurricane season, Louisiana's 2002 West Nile Virus outbreak, North Dakota's 2009 Red River Flooding, and the Southern California 2003 wildfires.³ Such events will only occur more frequently without strong action to prevent and mitigate climate change.

For this reason, we also support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2009 Endangerment Finding regarding greenhouse gases and have likewise opposed recent efforts to curtail EPA's authority or funding to implement the Clean Air Act. These and other efforts to reduce carbon emissions must continue to promote cleaner and more efficient sources of energy. The time to act is now, and public health needs to be an active participant in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. As noted in TFAH's *Health Problems Heat Up: Climate Change and the Public's Health* report, public health departments are uniquely qualified to help communities prepare for the adverse effects of climate change.⁴

Section 9 – Returning Fees to the American People

TFAH recommends that a portion of the funding raised by the carbon pollution fee go toward strengthening public health programs, which have an important role to play in developing a comprehensive agenda that seeks to prevent and prepare for climate change. We are just beginning to train our public health workforce to respond to health emergencies associated with climate change. However, due to funding cuts at the federal and state level, our public health system does not have the capacity to fully assess the public health impacts of climate change, let alone take steps to address them. Surveys of state and local public health officials report that their agencies lack adequate resources and capacity to formulate strategies to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of climate change and extreme weather events.⁵ Public health officials must play a central role in climate change policy and action.

For instance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) leads the agency's climate and health program, which leads the way providing technical assistance, training and tools to help state and local health officials create climate ready, resilient communities. This has resulted in funding for ten states and two city health department sites under the Climate-Ready States and Cities Initiative, a climate module for the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, and an Adaptation Guidebook for State and Local Health Departments. However, since fiscal year 2009, NCEH funding has been cut approximately 25 percent with the relatively small Climate and Health

² Knowlton, K, M. Rotkin-Ellman, L. Geballe, W. Max, G.M. Solomon. Six Climate Change-Related Events in the United States Accounted for About \$14 Billion in Lost Lives and Health Cost. *Health Affairs* Nov. 2011. (online at http://www.motherjones.com/files/knowlton_ff.pdf).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Trust for America's Health. *Health Problems Heat Up: Climate Change and the Public's Health*. Oct. 2009. (online at <http://www.healthyamericans.org/reports/environment/>).

⁵ ASTHO. State and Territorial Health Agency Needs for a Changing Climate: A Summary and Analysis of ASTHO's 2009 and 2012 Climate Health Needs Assessments. Dec. 2012 (online at <http://www.astho.org/Programs/Environmental-Health/Natural-Environment/Climate-Change/2012-Climate-and-Health-Survey-Report/>).

Program seeing about a 10 percent cut, and it is estimated to receive additional cuts under the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution.

These cuts could hamper the progress state and local health departments are making to respond to climate change. Specifically, CDC helps public health departments to identify, respond and adapt to the health impacts of climate change, and to translate surveillance and research on climate-related diseases into methods and best practices to predict and monitor health impacts and identify vulnerabilities. For example, in Austin/Travis Co. Texas, CDC funds allowed the local health department to map vulnerable populations in their jurisdiction and develop plans to keep them safe from extreme heat or flooding events. CDC also develops and supports training and educational activities for public health professionals about the health effects of climate change.

Other Comments

While outside the scope of this specific proposal, we also wish to note TFAH's strong support for legislation sponsored by Representative Capps that would provide expanded resources for state and local public health planning around climate change health effects. This legislation was included in the 2009 American Clean Energy and Security Act, introduced in a similar fashion as the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act in the 112th Congress. It is our understanding that it will be re-introduced as a standalone bill in the 113th Congress in the near future. We look forward to working with you to pass legislation like this that will be required in addition to efforts to curtail carbon emissions if we are to adequately respond to the threats before us.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this very important public health matter. Environmental public health activities will be critical to controlling our long-term federal deficit and controlling our health care spending for disease and other health threats that are preventable. As you move forward in finalizing this bill we strongly urge you to consider the investments in public health programs that are addressing climate change and to take appropriate actions to keep Americans safe and healthy.

If you have any questions, or wish to receive a detailed briefing on our *Health Problems Heat Up: Climate Change and the Public's Health* report, please contact Jack Rayburn, Government Relations Manager, by phone at (202) 223-9870 ext. 28, or via email at jrayburn@tfah.org. Thank you in advance for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeffrey" being more prominent than the last name "Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD
Executive Director