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## CLIMATE FOR HEALTH KEY TALKING POINTS

### WHY HEALTH LEADERS ARE ENGAGING OTHERS ON CLIMATE SOLUTIONS:

- **Highly Trusted Experts and Messengers on Climate Change Impacts and Solutions:** America's physicians, nurses and health professionals are consistently ranked as among the most trusted professionals and they occupy a unique and highly influential position in society. Americans of every political persuasion and background look to them for information and guidance on personal wellbeing, health threats and lifestyle choices and how environmental factors may impact their lives. Health experts can provide meaningful information and motivation to inform their patients, communities and policy makers about the practices and policies that are needed to help prevent and minimize climate-related health-risks.
- **Climate Solutions Align with "Do No Harm" Mission:** Health leaders have a responsibility to advocate for practices and policies that promote and protect human health. Whether driven by their firsthand experience with the emerging impacts of climate change, their oath to heal and do no harm, or a combination of both, health care professionals are on the leading edge of awareness and concern about the health repercussions of climate change.
- **Broad and Deep Reach Among Mainstream Americans:** More than 80 percent of Americans in 2009 reported that they had contact with a healthcare professional within the previous two years, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Health leaders have direct access to educating and engaging the public about their health choices, as well as opportunities to discuss the impacts on their health due to climate change and making personal choices that will help protect them and ensure their well-being.

Health professionals can also play a vital role in local and regional climate strategies by preparing their patients, health care facilities and communities to best address the anticipated health impacts of climate change, and inspire them to care for the climate in caring for their health.

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- **Climate First-responders:** The health sector is on the front lines of responding to an increasing number of debilitating weather events and the growing public health impacts from illness and disease due to climate-related seasonal weather changes. Health leaders can push for better prepared hospital, clinic and health care facilities that are equipped to provide care for their patients and communities in response to increases in extreme weather and vector-borne diseases.
  - **Protecting the Most Vulnerable:** Children, pregnant women, older adults and the poor are typically more susceptible to illness associated with heat and extreme weather events, as well as water-borne, vector-borne and food-borne illnesses.

## HOW CLIMATE FOR HEALTH CAN HELP:

- **Emphasizes Positive Health Benefits:** By emphasizing the highly valuable and immediate health benefits that arise from climate solutions, health leaders can more powerfully attract people to the incentives connected to taking action on climate change. For example, walking instead of driving strengthens heart health and wards off depression, while contributing to cleaner air and reducing climate impacts.
- **Delivers The Power of Health and Climate Stories:** Health stories on climate impacts cross political, gender and generational boundaries and personalize the large number of health threats posed by climate change. Personal stories can more importantly effectively connect people to how climate solutions are relevant to their own lives and those they care about within their families and communities. Health leaders can share first-hand experience of how climate change is becoming more visible through health impacts like asthma, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and Lyme's disease. They can offer medical advice on how to prepare, take care and help prevent these health impacts. And, where appropriate, share some of the following facts:
  - » Twice as many Americans are suffering from asthma now than in 1990
  - » Allergy seasons are longer and pollen counts are significantly higher, triggering more severe and prolonged symptoms
  - » Diseases such as dengue fever and malaria that were once relegated to the tropics are showing up in U.S. states such as Florida and Texas

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- » Ticks carrying debilitating Lyme diseases have expanded their territory to southern New England and Mid-Atlantic states and as far north as Canada
  - » Extreme weather events are increasing and causing injuries, death, disease and emotional trauma
  - » Heat-related illnesses have risen dramatically across wide swaths of America
- **Encourages Leadership by Example:** Hospitals and health care institutions are energy intensive, emitting nearly 8% of all American greenhouse gasses – second only to food service [According to the Journal of the American Medical Association]. Health care professionals can lead by example by reducing their institutional and personal climate impact, and supporting workplace sustainability efforts.
  - **Partners Across Sectors:** Health leaders can bring valuable expertise to help position climate change as an opportunity to drive community and financial improvements. Health leaders are needed to inform not only health policy and practices, but also to ensure that other systems – including transportation, agriculture, housing, infrastructure and education – integrate climate-related health impacts, incentives and opportunities into program and policy design and implementation.