

Vermont Climate and Health Alliance

Medical and Health Professionals Calling for Change

March 31, 2018

Dear Senator Kitchel,

In January of this year, The Vermont Climate and Health Alliance sent a letter to all the members of the Vermont legislature stating our conviction that, given current fossil fuel consumption trajectories, climate change will become the major threat to human and animal health in the 21st century. That letter was signed by nearly 300 Vermont medical and health professionals - and was endorsed by Vermont medical and health groups who represent thousands of professionals who work to protect our health and well-being every day.

For decades, climate scientists have been telling us that the climate and the oceans are sending unequivocal signals of poor planetary health. The pitch and intensity of those signals are now rising quickly. Based on the scientific evidence, we believe the underlying processes are near a tipping point, and, as such, a far more robust and immediate policy response is needed across the Nation.

Every day the evidence is mounting that the threat of climate change to the well-being of low income Vermonters, our kids, the elderly, the chronically ill, and indeed all people is very real, is already here, and is accelerating. As demonstrated by reports from the Center for Disease Control, the American Public Health Association, and many other highly regarded organizations, if we don't act, and act soon, our state and this country will be paying health (and infrastructure) related costs that are beyond comprehension.

We ask that you support and retain the climate portion of the budget (Section C.110) approved by the House. The modest initiatives included in the package are reasonable, rational, and represent badly needed forward progress. In particular, the proposal to have the Joint Fiscal Office study regulatory and market decarbonization mechanisms is essential.

There is an appalling amount of misleading rhetoric being tossed around that misrepresents the thinking, intent, and expected outcomes of mechanism concepts that have been proposed. A study by the Joint Fiscal Office will help sweep away much of the noise. With that, the Legislature would have a reasonable starting point for a thorough, fact-based, rational debate based on expert testimony and knowledge, and assessment of mechanism implementations underway in other locales. When it comes to action on climate change, if the well-funded voices of misinformation continue to win, the health and well-being of Vermont's citizens will be forever damaged.

Sincerely,
Dan Quinlan - Chair
Vermont Climate and Health Alliance