

I am Dan Quinlan, the Chair of the Vermont Climate and Health Alliance. We are Vermont physicians, nurses, therapists, veterinarians, researchers, aides, and other medical/health professionals who share a deep concern about climate change and its impacts on our patients, our children, our communities, and our planet. We have joined together in response to a deep conviction that climate change is an immensely powerful threat to Vermont communities.

I cannot think of a better place to be standing right now. It is an honor to be in the State House, surrounded by these committed friends from Vermont's medical and health community. We would like to express our gratitude to all our legislators for the work you do. We know what you do is not easy, far from it. You face a complex and vast set of critical challenges. Thank you for stepping up to take this work on.

I've spent the last 10 years working with health professionals in Vermont and across the country talking about the health threats of climate change. The medical community is unified in its concern about many things here. One threat we all see is the obvious (and predicted) increase in severe weather events that have been sending people to the hospital here in Vermont, and across the nation: people being hurt by storms, children suffering severe respiratory effects from wildfire smoke, older people having heart attacks brought on by heat waves – to name just three of many direct severe impacts on the health of people.

However, there is a second, much bigger health concern here.

Public health professionals focus on the phrase “social determinants of health”. Defined as: *“the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect virtually all health and quality-of-life-outcomes.”* The most obvious idea here are the severe weather events that tear up our roads and bridges, destroy farmers' fields and wipe out crops, prevent the shipment of goods, overrun our water treatment plants, and on and on and on. And the costs for that imposed on Vermonters is rising --- and it is accelerating.

In 2017, we started bringing this brilliant diagram from Center for Disease Control to the State House. At the center, they put the predicted changes in severe weather due to climate change. At the outside, they listed what those changes would do to people and our communities.

The first time we brought this diagram here, the impacts we were seeing in Vermont were mostly in one slice: the rapid growth of tick-borne Lyme disease. Since then, Vermonters have experienced severe impacts in every single slice of this diagram. I'd like to talk about one example of that.

In 2018 – 7 years ago – VTCHA teamed up the Vermont Department of Health in a series of talks about weather modeling work the Department had done. That scientific analysis demonstrated that we would see unprecedented flooding in Vermont.

In 2023 and 2024, we were slammed with 3 major floods in a period of less than 18 months. The 2024 flooding alone affected 28,000 acres of farmland and caused over \$16 million in losses and damages. Some farmers, including Jaiel Pulskamp who is with us today, were forced out of business entirely.

The Vermont health community sees firsthand and up close what those stories do to people over time – physically and psychologically.

If we don't act with urgency, climate change will radically undermine every social determinant of health across our communities. Similar statements have been adopted by every major professional medical group in the United States -- including the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Given all that and more - the idea that Governor Phil Scott and the Legislature are considering pulling back on a big block of Vermont's existing smart, high impact, equitable clean energy and climate legislation is staggering.

Over the years, Vermont has become a leader in enacting smart, high impact policies and programs around how we use and generate energy. Policies that lower energy costs, especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Policies that keep more of our energy spending in state. Policies that create good paying jobs while protecting the health and well-being of our kids and our grandkids. The new clean energy economy is booming across this country. How about we focus on more of that kind of forward, problem solving, economy building action?

For example, one wise idea this session would require that Vermont's energy efficiency utilities prioritize greenhouse gas emissions reductions, increasing access to a slew of new money saving services – delivered with particular attention to the needs of people in underserved and low-income communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to share these thoughts.