

SUPPORT THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY ACT: HB 42 AND SB 5

Sponsored by Representative Liz Thomson and Senator Liz Stefanics



The health and well-being of New Mexicans is increasingly at risk because of climate change. We must take action to protect our communities from its ever-worsening effects.

THE ISSUE

The health of New Mexicans is increasingly being harmed by climate change, and the rate of its associated extreme weather events, such as rising heat, drought and flooding – along with wildfires – are becoming more frequent and more fierce. These hazards impact physical and mental health in many ways, including increased rates of heat stress, insect-borne diseases, lung and heart disease, and allergies, which can lead to challenges such as financial and food insecurity and a deterioration in overall well-being. New Mexico's children, communities of color, older adults, people with disabilities, and families earning low incomes are most likely to suffer serious, long-term health consequences from these climate impacts.

BY THE NUMBERS

- New Mexico now has an average of **50 more days** of extreme wildfire risk conditions than in 1970.¹
- New Mexico saw an **18% increase** in respiratory emergency room visits during the wildfire season.²
- The number of emergency room visits for heat-related illness in New Mexico **more than doubled** between 2009 and 2019.³

THE SOLUTION

- Creating a **Public Health and Climate Resiliency Program** at the Department of Health to build capacity and expertise, support development and implementation of response systems, and improve interagency collaboration.
- Establishing a **Public Health and Climate Resiliency Fund** to assist and enable local and tribal communities to adapt to climate change and respond to public health emergencies from extreme weather events.

These two approaches, combined with meaningful engagement with communities most harmed by climate change, will help improve health outcomes, equity, climate adaptation, and climate resiliency in New Mexico.

The Public Health and Climate Resiliency Act is endorsed by:

350 New Mexico, American Lung Association, Climate Advocates Voces Unidas (CAVU), Center for Health Innovation, Chronic Disease Prevention Council, Conservation Voters NM, Health Action NM, Interfaith Power and Light, Moms Clean Air Force - EcoMadres, National Association of Social Workers - NM, Natural Resources Defense Council, NM Pediatric Association, NM Alliance of Health Councils, NM Environmental Public Health Network, NM Voices for Children, NMVC Action Fund, Open New Doors, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Presbyterian Healthcare Services, ProgressNow NM, Prosperity Works, Retake Our Democracy, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, and YUCCA.

Endnotes

1. "Fire Weather: Heat, dryness, and wind are driving wildfires in the Western U.S.," Climate Central, Aug. 25, 2021
2. Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, New Mexico Department of Health
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, accessed 10/21/2022: www.cdc.gov/ephtracking

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