

35th National Black Nurses Day on Capitol Hill Health Equity, Reckoning & Wellness: NBNA's Renewed Call to Action

Climate and Environmental Justice

The National Black Nurses Association supports comprehensive efforts to reduce climate and environmental justice. Black and Hispanic minorities bear a pollution burden of 56% and 63% excess exposure to fine particulate matter air pollution, respectively. Fine particulate matter exposure has been found to be responsible for 63% of deaths from environmental causes and 3% of deaths from all causes in the United States. In 2022, addressing the Jackson, Mississippi water crisis, equality and justice remains out of reach for Black communities across America. NBNA calls on the 118th Congress to address climate and environmental injustice as a urgent public health crisis.

Background

- In 2018, an EPA study found that Black Americans are subjected to higher levels of air pollution than White Americans, regardless of economic status.
- When the Flint water crisis began in 2014, it started what environmental justice experts would later call the most egregious example of environmental injustice and racism in recent U.S. history. The Flint water crisis is still ongoing in 2022. Although the water is considered safe to drink, infrastructure changes are still underway, as are several lawsuits and legal cases.
- Over 1 million Black Americans live within half a mile of oil and natural gas facilities, while 6.7 million live in counties with refineries, exposing them to high levels of toxic air emissions.
- Blacks are 75% more likely than Caucasians to live in “fence-line” communities next to commercial facilities whose noise, odor, traffic, or emissions that directly affect the population.
- HHS recognizes that people of color, disadvantaged, vulnerable, low-income, historically marginalized, and indigenous peoples, are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards and threats that drive health disparities, and social inequities.
- The combination of environmental risks and social inequities creates a cumulative, disproportionate impact that hinders optimal health and environmental justice for these populations.

Recommendations to Legislators

NBNA calls upon the 118th Congress to:

- Support H.R. 2310, S. 9.66: **Climate Change Education Act.**
 - This bill will increase the climate literacy of the United States
- Encourage support for H.R. 3271, S.1.702 **Climate Change Health Protection & Promotion Act of 2021.**
 - This bill will apply the latest scientific and technological discoveries to provide learning opportunities to all people.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). National Center for Health Statistics, 2022. Retrieved on December 21, 2021 from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/index.htm>
2. Gallagher, K. (2021, May 14). Environmental injustice: The Flint water crisis. Public health crisis exposed Michigan city to lead and bacterial for years. <https://www.treehugger.com/environmental-injustice-flint-water-crisis-5181655>
3. Salas, R. N., & Solomon, C, G. (2019). The climate crisis – Health and care delivery. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 381, e13. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmp1906035>