Whereas, The World Health Organization has asserted that climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity; and
Whereas, Climate change plays a role in the more than 700 Americans dying from heat related illness each year and over 11 million Americans living in counties with unhealthy levels of air pollution (PM2.5); and
Whereas, Climate change plays a role in death and illness from increasingly frequent extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, the disruption of food systems, increases in zoonoses and food-, water- and vector-borne diseases, and mental health issues; and
Whereas, Climate change also plays a role in undermining many of the social determinants for good health, such as livelihoods, equality and access to health care and social support structures. These climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately suffered by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged; and
Whereas, Like many other social determinants of health, the environmental impacts of climate change are often affected by historical, economic, and sociopolitical factors; and
Whereas, The relationship between climate change and social inequality can be characterized by a vicious cycle, whereby initial inequality makes disadvantaged groups suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change, resulting in greater subsequent inequality; and
Whereas, Our AMA has recently prioritized action on climate change by requesting development of a strategic plan (D-135.966, last modified 2022). Furthermore, our AMA policy aims to support “efforts to search for novel, comprehensive, and economically sensitive approaches to mitigating climate change” (H-135.938, last modified 2022); and
Whereas, While recent policy supports incorporating upstream determinants of health into individual patient care (H-135.938, last modified 2022), no policy exists to explicitly support incorporating social determinants of health considerations into systems level, “novel, comprehensive, and economically sensitive approaches to mitigating climate change”; therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association consider climate change, and the environmental impacts thereof, as social determinants of health and modifiers of other social determinants of health in its work on systems level, “novel, comprehensive, and economically sensitive approaches to mitigating climate change”. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

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