Whereas, Particulate matter (PM) or particle pollution is a mixture of solid particles and liquid
droplets found in the air that come in many sizes and shapes and can be made up of hundreds
of different chemicals; and

Whereas, Particulate matter inhaled can get deep into the lungs and even into the
bloodstream; and

Whereas, Particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, also known as fine particles or PM
2.5, pose the greatest risk to health; and

Whereas, In 2016-2018, more cities had high days of ozone and short-term particle pollution
compared to 2015-2017 and many cities measured increased levels of year-round particle
pollution; and

Whereas, Harmful revisions and setbacks to key protections currently in place or required under
the Clean Air Act of 1970 threaten to make air quality even worse in parts of the US; and

Whereas, Atmospheric pollutants have been linked to a host of chronic and acute illnesses, and
contribute to the risk of COVID-19 complications, with preventable health, social, and economic
impacts; and

Whereas, Evidence that both prenatal and postnatal exposures to PM 2.5 are associated with
later development of allergic rhinitis, a precursor to pediatric asthma, the vulnerable time
window may be within late gestation and the first year of life; and

Whereas, Poor air and water quality disproportionately affect the economically disadvantaged
as well as communities of color; and

Whereas, Statistics for 2020 show the nation’s electricity was generated from 60% of fossil
fuels, 20% from nuclear supplies and another 20% from renewable sources; and

Whereas, Current technology is capable of replacing fossil fuel-generated power with renewable
sources; and

Whereas, The Sixth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
released August 9, 2021, states that stabilizing global warming at 1.5°C, the goal of the Paris
Agreement, is achievable if the world acts quickly; and

Whereas, Congressional action on infrastructure and transportation will have a major impact on
whether temperatures can remain at or under the 1.5°C warming threshold; therefore be it
RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association work with the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity to champion legislation and policies at the federal level in order to drive down the generation of PM 2.5 and other pollutants by:

1. Shifting our energy generation away from polluting sources like fossil fuels and toward less polluting renewables; and
2. Shifting our agricultural practices away from traditional industrial practices like the use of excessive nitrate fertilizers and toward regenerative practices; and
3. Shifting other industries toward proper capture and disposal of waste to minimize the release of fine particulate pollution. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: Minimal - less than $1,000

Received: 10/28/21

AUTHORS STATEMENT OF PRIORITY

Air pollution is the leading environmental health risk humans face. The combined effects of outdoor and household air pollution cause around seven million (one in eight) premature deaths every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, lung disease, and cancers.

The annual Lancet Countdown on health and climate change provided an assessment concluding the world is not on track to meet the 1.5°C limit on warming, nor the 2015 Paris Agreement limit of below 2°C. The USA is one of five countries that has the greatest greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is set to become the “defining narrative of human health.”

Research sheds light on the links between air pollution and severe illness from COVID-19. A small increase in long-term average exposure to fine particle pollution is associated with an 11% increase in the COVID-19 death rate. Adding to the evidence on the connection between racial disparities, air pollution, and COVID-19, there is a 49% increase in the COVID-19 death rate in counties with elevated fine particle pollution and that had a higher Black population.

We request that our resolution be considered an urgent priority for the upcoming Interim Meeting. There is support from the Biden Administration to confront the climate crisis, to include protecting the air from harmful pollution. The time is now to make important changes for the health of our patients and put research ahead of politics to make significant, timely changes to save our planet.

References:


RELEVANT AMA POLICY

H-135.915 Preventing Death and Disability Due to Particulate Matter Produced by Automobiles. Last modified 2019.

H-135.921 AMA to Protect Human Health from the Effects of Climate Change by Ending its Investments in Fossil Fuel Companies. Last modified 2018.

H-135.923 AMA Advocacy for Environmental Sustainability and Climate. Last modified 2019.


H-135.979 Clean Air. Last modified 2019.


H-135.991 Clean Air. Last Modified 2014.

H-135.996 Pollution Control and Environmental Health. Last modified 2020.


D-135.997 Research into the Environmental Contributors to Disease. Last modified 2019.