



News Release

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CLIMATE CHANGE PUTS CHILDREN'S HEALTH AT RISK, PEDIATRICIANS GROUP TELLS CONGRESS

Washington, D.C.—The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), representing more than 60,000 pediatricians, today urged Congress to protect children from health hazards posed by climate change.

“As the climate changes, environmental hazards will change and often increase, and children are likely to suffer disproportionately from these changes,” Dana Best, MD, MPH, FAAP, and a member of the AAP Committee on Environmental Health told the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

Best told lawmakers that children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to many of the health risks associated with climate change, including:

- Injury and death caused by natural disasters and severe weather events;
- Greater susceptibility to infectious diseases that are sensitive to climate change, such as malaria;
- Short- and long-term lung damage, including chronic asthma, caused by air pollution and increasing exposure to allergens;
- Short- and long-term mental health impacts, including post-traumatic stress disorder, after traumatic events; and
- Heat stroke and heat exhaustion as well as skin damage and cancer caused by increased exposure to heat and ultraviolet radiation.

On behalf of the AAP, Best urged lawmakers to adopt aggressive policies aimed at halting man-made causes of climate change and to ensure that children's health needs are a vital part of emergency management and disaster preparedness planning, saying that government should:

- Develop aggressive, long-term policies to reduce the major contributing factors to global climate change;
- Invest in prudent and vital preparations for our public health care systems, including immunization programs and disease surveillance, reporting, and tracking;
- Give specific attention to the needs of children in emergency management and disaster response;
- Support education and public awareness of the threats from climate change and their implications for public and children's health now and in the future; and
- Fund interdisciplinary research to develop, implement and measure outcomes of innovative strategies to both mitigate and adapt to climate change, particularly in areas with direct implications for children's health.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For a copy of the AAP's October 2007 policy statement, "Global Climate Change and Children's Health," please contact: communications@AAP.org