

Guide for Kansas Climate + Health Declaration Op-Eds

The following is intended to guide supporters of the Kansas Climate + Health Declaration to write their own 600-800 word op-eds encouraging further support of the declaration.

- Use this guide to make these essential points in your op-ed: integrate key messages from the declaration into your op-ed.
- Reference sources from the science and health communities. Sources are listed at the bottom.
- In addition, incorporate anecdotes around your firsthand experience to help put a human face to the issue.

For tracking purposes, please forward your published op-eds to takeaction@resilientkansas.org.

Messaging Points

Note: these are intended to be a starting point. Prioritize the pieces that are most relevant for your organization and/or the author.

- I. **Climate disruption impacts lives, health, and economic well-being of Kansans.** Unless our state leaders respond with urgency, these impacts will dramatically increase as climate change worsens. *Choose points that are most relevant to you:*
 - Our agricultural economy depends heavily on the weather, therefore “climate change is a substantial concern in Kansas.”¹
 - We are already seeing the impacts of a changing climate. If we do not take immediate action to reduce emissions, we face increased risks of extreme drought, wildfires, floods, and food shortages.²
 - In Kansas, increases in extreme weather threatens livelihoods, destabilizes communities, and drains resources. Farmers, ranchers, construction workers, first responders, and military personnel will be among the first to experience the effects of climate change.³
- II. **Climate change is a major public health concern in Kansas.** Unless our state leaders respond with urgency, these impacts will dramatically increase as climate change worsens. *Choose points that are most relevant to you:*
 - Kansans will experience increases in cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and other chronic conditions according to projected climate change scenarios.¹
 - Longer periods of pollen production will worsen asthma symptoms and lead to longer, more intense, allergy seasons.⁴
 - Warmer temperatures and changes in the geographic ranges of ticks and mosquitoes will increase vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and West Nile Virus.⁵

- Increased heat wave intensity and frequency, increased humidity, degraded air quality, and reduced water quality will increase public health risks.⁶
- Impacts on mental health include increased stress, depression, and anxiety; strained social and community relationships; increases in aggression, violence, and crime; and increases in trauma, shock, and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁷

III. **Those least responsible will be the most impacted and least able to adapt.**

While the health and well-being of all Kansas is at risk, the [health impacts of climate change are not evenly shared](#).

- “Climate change exacerbates existing health and social inequities.”⁸
- Vulnerable populations will bear the greatest burden. Children, seniors, low income communities, communities of color, immigrant communities, those with chronic disease, pregnant women, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities will be most impacted.⁸
- “Failure to take prompt, substantive action would be an act of injustice to all children.”⁹
- If you are submitting to a local paper, incorporate localized data. For the examples below, you can find estimates of your county’s total numbers of children with asthma, adults with asthma, people over 65, people with COPD, and people with cardiovascular disease at www.lung.org/sota. Select your state and select “groups at risk” for a county-by-county listing.
 - Children, who face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are still developing and because they are often more active outdoors.
 - [COUNTY]’s more than [NUMBER] children are especially vulnerable.
 - The elderly, who are at higher risk of health problems from the impact of climate change.
 - In [COUNTY], there are [NUMBER] of elderly people, all of whom deserve protection from the harms of climate change.
 - People with chronic illness, who also risk greater harm from the impacts of climate change.
 - In [COUNTY], there are currently [NUMBER] people with [asthma/COPD/Lung cancer/cardiovascular disease], which means they face greater risk.

IV. **Your Call to Action:** We need to reduce risks of climate disruption to safeguard the future of our state. Our state’s leaders need to recognize climate change as a public health issue and take steps to combat it. Solutions exist that build resilience, economic opportunities, and healthy communities. To protect human health from the harms of climate change, **I/we declare a commitment to a healthier future for all.**

- I/we stand with leading public health organizations in making a clear call to our state’s leadership to address climate change as a primary threat to public health.

- I/we call on our Kansas leaders in government [option of inserting specific elected officials by position or even by name], to heed the urgent call from health professionals and health organizations and take bold, comprehensive action to reduce emissions and build resilience.
- We call on our leaders to prioritize health outcomes in climate policy solutions at all levels of government, business and the social sector.
 - We urge our leaders to support policies that;
 - protect Kansas water, energy, air, and land resources.
 - Reduce emissions associated with electricity generation, transportation, and agriculture.
 - Maximize the energy savings that are available by improving energy efficiency.
 - Secure and increase access to healthcare across the state.
 - Learn about solutions that work in Kansas.
 - Take action in homes, organizations, and communities.
 - Move to sustainable farms and food systems including best soil health to achieve maximum carbon sequestration, and ensure that everyone has access to safe drinking water.
 - Adopt state and local Climate Action Plans setting a deliberate course for the future.

Kansas-specific data supporting the Climate + Health Declaration comes from the following sources:

1. [Kansas Health Institute](#) 2. [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) 3. [U.S. Global Change Research Program](#) 4. [American Lung Association](#) 5. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) 6. [USGBCRP Nat'l Climate Assessment: Midwest](#) 7. [American Psychological Association](#) 8. [American Public Health Association](#) 9. [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). See "References" on next page for full citations or visit ResilientKansas.org.

REFERENCES

American Academy of Pediatrics (2019). [Climate Change and Children's Health](#).

American Lung Association (2019). [Asthma and Climate Change: What you need to know](#).

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American Public Health Association (2019). [Climate Change is a Health Emergency](#).

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Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019). [Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by governments](#).

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U.S. Global Change Research Program (2016). [Climate and Health Assessment: The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment.](#)