

Health Care Without Harm - National

Catalyzing the Health Care Sector for Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Equity

As a grant-funded partner in the Climate Change Health and Equity (CCHE) initiative, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) has been working to expand the network of U.S. hospitals engaged in climate solutions; mitigate health care's climate impact; build community climate resilience; and advocate for climate- and health-smart policies across the U.S. Their efforts align with the overall [CCHE Theory of Change](#) as part of Strategy 1.

HCWH is a system orchestrator working globally to catalyze the transformation of the health care sector not by scaling a single solution but by mobilizing and coordinating unified efforts to solve problems at scale, leveraging its network of 70,000+ hospitals and health centers across 80+ countries. Their U.S.-focused CCHE-funded activities are outlined in a 2022 theory of change, [here \(slide 8\)](#) and described in more detail below. Key partners in HCWH's CCHE-funded work are listed at the end of the document. Through these efforts, HCWH has expanded and deepened their work in the U.S. and seen an exponential increase in health care climate action since 2018. As an example of this monumental shift, over 940 hospitals at the time of writing have committed to reducing emissions and meeting climate resilience goals via the [HHS Climate Pledge](#), in part a result of HCWH's efforts since 2022 to encourage hospitals to sign on.



Mission:

Transform health care worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes a community anchor for sustainability, and leads the global movement for environmental health and justice.

Policies, Activities, and Initiatives Advanced During the CCHE Initiative

Promoted climate resilience by providing tools and resources to enhance health system facility preparedness and support investments in community health. Grounded in the organization's three-pillar framework for climate resilience - including health care facility resilience, public infrastructure resilience, and community resilience - HCWH has developed and promoted numerous tools and resources to guide health systems' climate resilience efforts. For example, they produced a national playbook for health systems to engage in disaster planning with community partners to address social determinants of health. The playbook includes a case story from another CCHE grant-funded partner, Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHIWM), and is based on lessons learned during the planning, execution, and follow-up to an extreme-heat tabletop exercise. This and other resources that help health systems develop strategies and understand successes from peers related to community resilience and well-being are linked in the "Select Resources" box on page 3. HCWH also engaged its extensive Practice Greenhealth network of 1,700+ hospitals in the U.S. in training and learning opportunities, such as a resilience planning cohort for hospitals in 2023 that engaged over fifty health care staff in developing their first-ever climate resilience plans in alignment with HCWH's three-pillar framework. HCWH has also developed resources and offered support for hospitals that signed the HHS Health Sector Climate Pledge, including guidance for developing required resilience plans in ways that are mindful of equity and community input.

Elevated opportunities for health systems to implement decarbonization solutions that support community health and equity.

In addition to the resources and tools outlined above, HCWH developed and disseminated tools and programs for decarbonization and transforming supply chains to reduce emissions and build community wealth. For example, the Climate Action Playbook highlights 44 climate initiatives implemented by U.S. Health Care Climate Council members, and HCWH worked with its extensive Practice Greenhealth network on mitigation initiatives, toolkits, and guidance documents. For example, Health Care Without Harm's new Health Care Emissions Impact Calculator tool is the first-ever free, publicly available tool, designed specifically for health care, for measuring greenhouse gas emissions across all three Scopes.

Despite progress and momentum, HCWH sees a continued opportunity and need to help health system leadership better understand their role as community anchors for climate resilience and health equity. There is more work to be done with health care organizations around how climate change relates to racial equity as well as health-related issues like air quality and food access. Additionally, HCWH's efforts around supply chain transformation (e.g., preferential purchasing for suppliers with commitments to environmental sustainability) continue to advance, but this has been a complex issue that is slower to progress. The Healthcare Anchor Network's Impact Purchasing Commitment, administered in collaboration with HCWH and Practice Greenhealth, is an important foundation for future efforts.

Supported activation and advocacy of health care systems and practitioners through leadership bodies and clinician networks.

HCWH has expanded the number of health care systems and practitioners mobilized to engage in climate resilience and equity work. Its Practice Greenhealth network has grown by more than 20 percent between 2022 and 2024. HCWH's U.S. Health Care Climate Council is a powerful, leading voice in the sector, with membership including 19 leading health systems representing over 550 hospitals and 9,500 health centers in 45 states, with more than 1.2 million employees serving over 77 million patients annually. As one example of the Climate Council's work in action, they successfully requested a Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) waiver to use Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds for renewable microgrids, demonstrating how clean energy can be reliable and a better back up source for energy than fossil-fuel based generators during emergencies. This shift in CMS policy as a result of the Climate Council's efforts removed a regulatory barrier to reducing pollution while ensuring health care facility and community resilience. HCWH has also partnered with other CCHE grant-funded partners like the Medical Consortium on Climate and Health and the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE) to engage health professionals, for example, around the HCWH-ANHE Nurses Climate Challenge. HCWH's Physician Network brings 1,300+ physicians and other health professionals together to advocate for issues such as creating medical and clinical director of sustainability positions at their facilities.

Advocated for equity and justice provisions in legislation at the federal and state level, engaging with federal and state policymakers and administration officials. HCWH has seen significant success advocating for new federal and state policies and programs that support health care decarbonization and community resilience, particularly at the federal level since the Biden Administration took office in 2020, the HHS Office of Climate Change and Health Equity was created in 2021, and the IRA was passed in 2022. While much of HCWH's policy engagement work is behind the scenes by design, the recent success of the creation of the voluntary CMS TEAM Decarbonization and Resilience Initiative is a testament to years of HCWH's advocacy efforts. At the state level, HCWH has also seen fruits of their efforts pay off, for example, through the passage of Act H.5060 in the Massachusetts Legislature in 2022, to which HCWH contributed to the development of four amendments for clean energy sources and offshore wind.

Select Resources and Media

Op-Eds and Articles:

- [Essential hospitals can lead a holistic approach to climate and health," *The Hill*; \(2022\)](#)
- [U.S. health care rises to meet the climate crisis, bringing opportunity for transformation, *The Hill* \(2022\)](#)
- [Health Care Takes on Climate Change, *Stanford Social Innovation Review* \(2024\)](#)
- [The power of procurement: Health care's opportunity to make supply chains more sustainable \(2024\)](#)

Resources for health systems:

- [Anchored by Health Care: Strategies for Health Systems \(2023\)](#)
- [Climate Resilience for Health Care and Communities \(2022\)](#)
- [A Practical Guide to Community-Based Disaster Planning \(2022\)](#)
- ["Sustainability IS Healthcare": Brockton Behavioral Health Center Becomes America's First Net Zero Mental Health Facility \(2023\)](#)
- [Climate Resilience Planning Guidance for Health Care Systems \(2024\)](#)

Insights from CCHE Initiative

- **Increasing momentum around health care sector decarbonization and climate resilience is a trend not only in the U.S., but globally.** HCWH observes that the momentum described among U.S. health care institutions is paralleled in other countries, as well as with international funders and governments that are “understanding the connections between climate change and health equity in a way that hasn’t happened in the past.”
- **HCWH’s worldwide presence strengthens their work in the U.S., and vice versa.** In 2024, using funding from a source outside of the CCHE initiative, HCWH and global partners convened representatives from 98 health care organizations worldwide to share learnings from decarbonization and climate resilience initiatives. These learnings and others from HCWH’s international network inform both the U.S. and global strategies and actions. This reciprocal influence ensures that HCWH’s efforts to advance climate resilience and health equity are grounded in global, as well as national and local, contexts and promising practices.
- **There is increasing awareness of climate change as a threat multiplier and integrated issue with health and equity, and of the complexity of these issues.** However, philanthropic funders will need to make bigger, more significant, and more flexible multi-year investments at this intersection to catalyze the field and advance systems change work that is needed to face the climate change crisis.
- **Partnership, patience, trust, and listening are key components of long-term sustainable impact.** While engaging community members meaningfully can slow down the process of project development and implementation and take more time, that engagement is critical as it will lead to better, more equitable health outcomes. “The more effort we can put into and work with health systems to take the time for collaboration, the better – the value of working with community-based organizations is ten-fold.”

Looking Ahead

HCWH recently developed a new U.S. Strategic Plan for 2024-2026 which articulates three core objectives to advance the organization’s mission: Mitigation, Resilience, and Equity. The Strategic Plan also charts the course through five levers through which the organization will deepen and expand its impact: 1) Lead advocacy and shape critical policy 2) Expand and mobilize its powerful global network 3) Transform supply chains and procurement practices 4) Deepen place-based partnerships between health care and communities in keeping with the practices outlined in HCWH’s resource, “Anchored by Health Care...” and 5) Strengthen its movement platform through investments in core infrastructure. Place-based initiatives are the newest addition to HCWH’s strategic levers; through this strategy, HCWH aims to prompt health systems to leverage their power as anchor institutions to reduce social disparities in climate impacts and protect vulnerable communities and identify climate interventions and/or advocacy issues from which lessons could be drawn for other communities and for policy development at the federal level. HCWH is doubling down on its place-based initiatives in the Bay Area (where they are building on the success of their Anchors in Resilient Communities project, led in collaboration with fellow CCHE grantee the Emerald Cities Collaborative) and in Boston (where they have a 25+ year history of work). In addition, HCWH expects to announce the new site selections for additional place-based work in October 2024. Through their continued efforts at this intersection, HCWH expects to see health care institution partners to continue reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, developing climate resilience in their facilities and communities, and demonstrating climate and health equity through deep, place-based initiatives with local communities.

Key Partners

Organization	Type
Advent Health	Health Partner
Advocate Health	Health Partner
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environment	Health Partner
America is All In	Environmental Partner

Organization	Type
America's Essential Hospitals / Essential Hospitals Institute	Institutional Partner
American Lung Association (Healthy Air Partners Coalition)	Health Partner
Arbor Day Foundation	Environmental Partner
Ascension	Health Partner
ASHE Green Healthcare Construction	Environmental Partner
Boston Green Ribbon Commission	Government Partner
Boston Medical Center	Health Partner
Ceres	Environmental Partner
CommonSpirit Health	Health Partner
Emerald Cities Collaborative	Institutional Partner
Hackensack Meridian Health	Health Partner
Healthcare Anchor Network	Health Partner
HealthPartners	Health Partner
Institute for Healthcare Improvement	Institutional Partner
Intermountain Healthcare	Health Partner
Kaiser Permanente	Health Partner
Mass General Brigham	Health Partner
Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health	Health Partner
National Academy of Medicine	Academic Partner
Northern Light Health	Health Partner
Northwell	Health Partner
NYU Langone Health	Health Partner
Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center	Health Partner
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	Government Partner
Practice Greenhealth Network	Health Partner
Providence	Health Partner
Rochester Regional Health	Health Partner
Seattle Children's Hospital	Health Partner
Stanford Health Care	Health Partner
University of California Health	Health Partner
University of Vermont Medical Center	Health Partner