Establishing the Hawai‘i Working Group on Climate Change and Health: Encouraging public health focus on the impacts of climate change through intersectoral collaboration, key partnerships and greater community involvement

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Hawai‘i Climate Change and Health Initiative: 2013-2015

• In 2013, HPHA’s Board began discussing the public health response to climate change and its impacts on health.
• In 2014, HPHA applied for and received a $50,000 grant from APHA, to establish and implement a public policy project, called Health in All Policies (HIAP).
• Our overall aim was to address the social determinants of health by focusing on climate change and its consequences on public health outcomes, through adoption of new state policy.
• Following an HPHA Climate Change and Health survey of HPHA membership (August-Sept. 2014), an October 2014 Stakeholders Briefing was held at the State Capitol, where survey information and other climate change and health presentations were shared.

HPHA Climate Change and Health Survey

Key Findings – Climate Change Is a Public Health Issue

• Approximately 58% of public health professionals responding were “very concerned” about the potential impacts of Climate Change on Hawai‘i’s residents or felt that it was the number one health issue today.
• Just over 29% were “somewhat concerned”.
• Approximately 66% felt that the impacts of Climate Change on health in Hawai‘i received “little to no attention”.
• Less than 6% felt that the impacts of Climate Change on Health have received “a lot or too much attention”.

In terms of human health consequences, the key Climate Change and Health risks for Hawai‘i (Based on IPCC risk factors) were identified by HPHA members to be:

1. Asthma, Respiratory Allergies and Airway Diseases
2. Foodborne Diseases and Nutrition
3. Heat-Related Morbidity and Mortality
4. Cancer

Conclusions

• Current perceptions of Climate Change and Health factors appear to be based on personal knowledge, rather than a more coordinated public health response.
• Public Health needs to discuss these emerging/potential threats to determine a coordinated effective response to Climate Change and Health.
• Public health professionals appear to be ready to do their part, if provided the education, skills and resources.

ALOHA! For More Information:

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The Hawai‘i Public Health Association

HPHA is an affiliate of the APHA and an association of community members, public health professionals and organizations dedicated to improving public health. HPHA represents a membership of over 650 practitioners, professionals, and students in the field of public health statewide. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

• STRATEGIC FOCUS:
• Providing leadership and education on public health issues
• Promoting advocacy and supporting coalitions for healthy communities, populations and environments
• Fostering networks and training opportunities for public health professionals

In terms of climate change and its health impacts, my feelings about my personal role on this issue is: (N=83)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not involved or interested</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat involved or interested</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved or inspired</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired</td>
<td>1%</td>
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HPHA’s Role in HCR 108

• Drafted and edited companion bills SB 882 and HB 591 relating to the establishment of a Climate Change and Health Working Group.
• Wrote concurrent resolutions SCR 164 and HCR 108 relating to the establishment of a Climate Change and Health Working Group (no funding).
• Collaborated with other public and private sector organizations to testify in support of the bills and resolutions.
• Provided lead testimony at House and Senate Health and Environment hearings related to the bills and resolutions.

Working Group Updates

Meeting agenda to date include:

Meeting 1: Aug 20, 2015: Focus: Introduction to HG, overview of HCLDR, DOI and HICWG’s purpose; Climate Change Hawai‘i activities; Developing, improving, integrating and maintaining state and regional disease surveillance systems and monitoring capacity to respond to health-related effects of climate change.
Meeting 3: Oct 15, 2015: Focus: Respiratory and pulmonary effects, including responses to air allergens; The health effects of air pollution, including heightened sensitivity to air pollution; Brief overview of the implications of climate change for the world and Hawai‘i; The need for action on climate change starting yesterday.
Meeting 4: Nov 19, 2015: Focus: Cardiovascular effects, including impacts of temperature extremes; Mental and behavioral health impacts of climate change in the health of displaced persons and at-risk populations and communities; CDC BRACE resources on climate adaptation.

Implementation of House Concurrent Resolution HCR 108, SD1

“Requested the convening of a Hawai‘i Climate Change and Health Working Group by the Dept. of Health to assess the scope of risks of climate change on the health of Hawai‘i’s residents and to develop a strategic plan to address climate change risks to health statewide.”

Hawai‘i Climate Change and Health Working Group Goals

• Producing preliminary report and recommendations to the Department of Health (DOH), which DOH transmits to the 2016 Legislature.
• Identify key issues to address first and potential resources (e.g. CDC’s BRACE Initiative).
• Identify potential partners to accomplish goals.

Long-term Objectives

• Establish DOH position to address climate change and health coordination within the DOH and the Public Health workforce.
• Seek resources to support adaptation efforts.
• Train and educate public health workforce and community on adapting to climate change while addressing evolving health-related issues.

Hawai‘i Climate Change and Health Legislative and Policy Advocacy Climate Change and Health: Spring 2015

• Following an HPHA-organized briefing on climate change and health held at the State Capitol on October 23, 2014, the decision was made to work with key state legislators to introduce a climate change and health bill (HB 591 and SB 882).
• During initial hearings on the 2 bills, resistance emerged that focused on HB 591 proposing to amend Hawai‘i’s Climate Adaptation Initiative Act 83, Session Laws of Hawai‘i, 2014.
• The stated purpose of Act 83 was to address the effects of climate change to protect the State’s economy, health, environment, and way of life.
• Act 83 established an interagency climate adaptation committee within the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).
• The proposed Act 83 climate change committee would first and foremost focus on and develop sea level rise vulnerability and adaptation reports. DLNR opposed revisiting this intent.
• HPHA negotiated a new approach to establishing climate change and health as a resolution rather than a bill.