

Greetings,

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending DNREC's Climate + Health Conference where I welcomed professionals in health care, infrastructure, transportation, emergency management, environmental concerns, and social causes on behalf of Delaware as your Lt. Governor. This diverse group shared a common interest: a professional and personal dedication to keeping Delawareans safe and healthy. This objective is one that I have fought for both as a public health nurse and elected official.

Today, one of the greatest long-term threats to the safety and health of Delawareans is climate change, which we must face with good planning and preparations.

When we think of climate change, we usually think first of heat. Higher average temperatures and more extreme weather events, including frequent heat waves which take a toll on outdoor workers, people with pre-existing health and heart conditions, children, and the elderly. With the number of people in Delaware aged 65 or older expected to double in the next 35 years, the rising temperatures and their effect on the elderly are a particular concern.

Air quality is also a primary health concern, as well as an economic stressor. Based on estimates from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, the total financial burden of asthma in Delaware is about \$200 million a year. Additionally, changing climate and ecosystems may bring a predicted increase in cases of Zika virus, Lyme's disease, the West Nile Virus, and other illnesses.

These are health challenges we face without considering climate change. After all, climate change is a risk-magnifier. The more we know about, and can work together to better understand climate change, the more prepared we will be for its impacts – including any additional threats we haven't yet identified.

As health professionals, we have a responsibility to protect our residents and our State from these threats. The first step is figuring out what our organizations' needs are both separately and collectively, and where there are opportunities for collaboration. That's why this issue of The Delaware Journal of Public Health is so important.

Again, as a nurse, a mother, a fellow Delawarean, and Delaware's Lieutenant Governor in an administration that remains committed to combating both the causes and effects of climate change in the First State, I thank you for the work you do every day to keep Delawareans safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bethany A. Hall-Long, PhD, RNC, FAAN

Lt. Governor- Delaware

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