HEALTHY CLIMATE WISCONSIN’S
2023 YEAR IN REVIEW
BY THE NUMBERS

103 times HCW or our health professional advocates received news media attention.

48 presentations for health sector and public audiences.

509 official comments and health testimony for agencies & policymakers.

193 new members joined us from interdisciplinary health fields.

6 more Wisconsin-based health systems making 2030 goals to reduce 50% of emissions.

1780 MW in new Wisconsin solar and battery projects HCW supported that were approved.

22 educational meetings and events with policymakers.

2,694,000 Wisconsinites defended from steep utility rate increases.

863,769 social media impressions on our health messaging.

378 health workers received CE credits from our educational events.

32,690,000 tons of greenhouse gas and toxic air pollutants prevented by 2042 through EPA rules.

6 climate publications or peer-reviewed articles published by HCW members.
Recognizing that Wisconsin’s legislature was unlikely to take significant action on climate policies in 2023, we turned our attention to moving the needle within our health systems, and local and federal levels, while carefully picking which issues to engage in at the state level. This strategy connected us with new environmental justice and rural partners and welcomed an incredible year of growth for HCW. Empowering health professionals to work together to advocate for Wisconsinites’ access to clean air, affordable energy, and protection from climate change addresses root causes of health disparities. On a personal note, I find this work meaningful. Preventing the suffering of my community before it occurs, through embedding public health in policy decisions and system change, gives me hope for a world where our patients have the freedom to thrive and not just survive.

Looking forward to 2024,
Joel Charles, MD, MPH
FATHER. RURAL FAMILY DOCTOR. HCW BOARD CHAIR.
To begin the year, HCW drafted an advocacy letter encouraging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to reopen the Health Sector Climate Pledge. The action gained the support of over 45 medical groups and stakeholders nationwide and culminated in the re-opening of the pledge only seven days after the letter was delivered. Over 15% of U.S. hospitals have now taken the pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, achieving net zero by 2050.
CLIMATE-SMART HEALTHCARE
BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Led by physicians Claire Gervais, Joanne Bernstein, and Zoe Rammelkamp, our Climate-Smart Healthcare Team has launched an outreach program to encourage more health systems and clinics to lower their pollution and waste. The team connects HCW health professionals within health systems and has them talk about ways to move their organizations toward climate goals. Successful meetings have been hosted within SSM Health, Froedtert/Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), and Advocate Aurora. Networking at MCW led to the development of the Center for Sustainability, Health, and the Environment. Current system outreach is to Marshfield, ThedaCare, Group Health Cooperative, and Mercy Health.

To support health professionals in joining together and pushing for more sustainable initiatives within their health systems, the team created HCW’s “Climate-Smart Healthcare Toolkit,” which includes resources on how health professionals can start green teams in their organizations.
If the global health sector were a country, it would be the fifth largest carbon emitter in the world between Japan and Russia. As an ophthalmologist, I take action by showing my colleagues that climate-smart healthcare protects our patients and the public.

Chirantan Mukhopadhyay, MD
FATHER. OPTHAMOLOGIST. HCW BOARD MEMBER.
Read Chirantan’s 2023 Retina Today article >>>

The Climate-Smart Healthcare Team also created Climate Success Stories, a section on HCW’s website where health professionals can read inspiring stories about how their peers are implementing sustainable practices in their own health systems and clinics, large or small. Even more stories were shared at our annual conference.
HCW's rapid response efforts earlier this year brought together over 750 healthcare workers from across the nation, along with 32 prominent health organizations to raise support for Joint Commission sustainability efforts. This alone is a remarkable achievement that demonstrates that our movement is growing at an astonishing pace.

Then on September 18, the Joint Commission, which credits over 22,000 healthcare organizations unveiled its Sustainable Healthcare Certification for U.S. hospitals. This program was launched alongside an online resource center, which will serve as a hub of guidance for hospitals to adopt new practices. This moment holds immense potential. By signaling its commitment to decarbonization, the Joint Commission is underlining the importance of climate-smart healthcare for enhancing patient safety. This is a monumental stride toward a healthier, more inclusive future for all that we can build off of for lasting change.
Beloit, which is situated southeast of Alliant Energy’s recently expanded gas-fueled power plant, has an abnormally high amount of asthma hospitalizations, a low life expectancy, and is predominantly people of color and low-income, according to the [EPA’s Environmental Justice Screening Tool](#). Despite these concerns, the Beloit community had no particulate air monitors to provide publicly accessible data, preventing community members from understanding the real-time air pollution sources in their area and mitigating health risks.
We brought together a local team that installed five PurpleAir monitors to provide transparent real-time information that can fuel future policy and decision-making.

Community members and students helped install the monitors in visible locations to empower others to see environmental justice in their lives.

Sensor Locations:
- Beloit High School
- Family Service Center of Southern WI
- Merill Community Center
- Turner High School
- Welty Environmental Center

Beloit High School’s AP Environmental Class installed their monitor and is using the data to learn about the health impacts of climate change and scientific methods. And three UW–Eau Claire students are analyzing it for public health statistics training.
We raised awareness about our new air monitoring network and the dangerous health impacts of burning fossil fuels through outreach and press. We received TV, radio and print coverage statewide.

Presented and discussed the data with:
- Rotary Club of Beloit
- Physicians and Pediatricians at Beloit Health System (some are now sharing live air quality data with patients)
- Beloit City Council
- WI DNR and DHS
- Testified at the EPA

To amplify the message that there’s nothing natural about gas and urge the EPA to strengthen pollution safeguards, we created a social media toolkit that we shared with over 46 organizations.
The EPA estimates that the Nemadji Trail Energy Center, an expensive 600 MW gas plant proposed by Dairyland Power Co-op, would cause $2 billion in climate damages if built. The site in Superior, WI is upwind of tribal areas and next to Ojibwe burial grounds.

That’s why over 20 health workers joined local leaders and Indigenous tribes working to stop it. HCW members submitted comments to the USDA about the subsidy being considered for the plant and met with Dairyland’s CEO multiple times to encourage them to shift track toward an ambitious clean energy grant under the Empowering Rural America Program. Dairyland’s updated proposal (currently under federal review) would build dramatically more renewables compared to what they had been planning to deploy.

“Climate change is posing in our generation a life-threatening situation for my kids, grandkids, and for all populations, especially those who are already shouldering health inequities. HCW provides me with the collegiality to work alongside other public health and healthcare care providers to make the change we need to!”

Pamela Guthman, DNP, RN, APHN-PHN
RURAL SCHOOL NURSE. GRANDMA. HCW BOARD MEMBER.
Listen to a radio interview with Pam >>
Feet are extremely vulnerable to floods precipitated by climate change. The rate of amputations increases after flooding. Through my work at a federally qualified health center, I know it’s vulnerable communities like those I serve that will be most impacted. By advancing environmental justice, I can better protect my patients and community.

Rene’ Settle-Robinson, DPM
GRANDMA. PODIATRIC SURGEON. HCW BOARD MEMBER.
Read Rene’s article on particulate matter that will be featured by the National Medical Association in 2024 >>
2023 WAS A HUGE YEAR FOR SOLAR

This year the Public Service Commission (PSC) approved over 1,300 MW in solar projects and 480 MW in battery. To give an idea of how amazing that is, the approval of High Noon Solar and battery storage alone will power 58,000 homes. The expansion of solar allows utilities to reduce their reliance on coal and improves public health. HCW members commented on each of these projects and Commissioners noticed. Here is a statement directly from their decision on Langdon Mills, “renewable generation projects such as this one promote public health and welfare by generally avoiding most of the impacts created by other types of electric generation.”

Northern Prairie Solar - 101 MW
Elk Creek Solar - 300 MW
Saratoga Solar - 150 MW
Portage Solar - 250 MW
High Noon Solar - 300 MW
Langdon Mills Solar - 200 MW
HCW joined efforts to reject Madison Gas and Electric and Alliant Energy’s rate hikes and proposed net metering policies, which would have discouraged Wisconsinites from adopting rooftop solar on their homes. In both cases, the PSC rejected the utilities’ net metering proposals and protected rooftop solar as a viable option for Wisconsin families.

Listen to our WORT radio interview to learn more >>

More than 25 million US households report reducing or forgone food or medicines to pay electricity costs. This often referred to as “heat or eat” poses high risk of malnutrition for children. Other health impacts include asthma and respiratory issues, heart disease, and mental health harms.

A legacy of racist housing policies, and job and income discrimination, contributes Black and Brown families living in inefficient homes that have higher energy costs, families, increasing health inequities. Low- to moderate-income families will absorb the health burden of rate hikes.

WE SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED NET-METERING

MADISON GAS & ELECTRIC AND ALLIANT ENERGY JUST PROPOSED RATE INCREASES & CUTS TO SOLAR

WHAT’S HAPPENING?

BILL INCREASES

- MGE has proposed an electricity rate increase of 9.6% for residential customers and 8.8% for small businesses, with a natural gas increase of 4.5% for residential customers and 1.8% for small businesses.
- Alliant has proposed an electricity rate increase of 19.2% for residential customers and 8.7% for small businesses, with a natural gas increase of 7.5% for residential customers and 5.9% for small businesses.

CUTS TO ROOFTOP SOLAR

Both proposals would harm rooftop solar by disrupting net metering, making it unaffordable for families and health clinics to budget for rooftop solar investments.

OUR UTILITIES ARE BLAMING CLEAN ENERGY FOR PRICE HIKES THEY RAISE IN PROFITS

Both MGE and Alliant proposed to keep their profit rates (return on equity) above the nation average at 9.8% and 10%, respectively.

- MGE reported a profit of $111 million in 2022 or more than double the size increases being sought.
- Alliant reported $350 million in profit in 2022, and another $88 million so far.

HOW DO THESE PROPOSALS CONNECT TO HEALTH EQUITY?

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ENERGY JUSTICE IS A HEALTH ISSUE www.healthyclimatewi.org/fair-rates-solar
HCW is part of the Energy Burden Working Group, a coalition of social justice and climate organizations calling for energy justice. In 2023, We Energies, Madison Gas and Electric, and Alliant Energy proposed rate increases that would have heightened energy burden for low-income families. Energy burden is a social determinant of health linked to environmental racism and lower life expectancy.

Health professionals submitted comments on the PSC’s Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP), rate increases, and continue to advocate for the expansion of weatherization and energy efficiency. Following public engagement, the PSC ruled in favor of lowering the hikes in all three cases and told utilities they would be looking more closely at price structures in future cases.

As a healthcare provider, I know how important it is to have warmth in the winter and cool in hot summers. Optimum health requires a healthy environment! We must do our best to maintain it for future generations.

Carla Wright, MD, FAAPMR
INTERNIST. FRIEND. HCW BOARD MEMBER.
We’re building relationships with reporters to ensure public health is part of climate coverage. HCW pitches, press releases, and press conferences are bringing health messages to the forefront of stations, newspapers, and medical newsletters in a big way – with over **103 articles featuring HCW or our members this year**. Topics range from the health of climate refugees to rural populations or heat in Milwaukee.

We are also co-leading the Climate and Health Communications Collaborative (CHCC) with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Through the collaborative, we facilitate conversations across partners to develop shared plans and resources for climate and health communication.
HCW’s health professionals hit the road and gave 48 talks about how climate solutions are health solutions across the state. Dr. Bruce Krawisz’s presentation for the Marshfield City Council even turned into a 45 minute TV segment.

Here are just a few of the places where our members presented:

- Advocate Aurora Health Grand Rounds
- UW School of Medicine and Public Health
- Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians
- Marshfield Clinic Research Institute
- Society of Internal Medicine
- Edgewood Nursing
- UW Eau Claire Public Health Program

In April, over 100 health professionals gathered at our annual conference which offered interdisciplinary CE credit. You can find the full agenda and conference workbook here. >>

And over 270 nurses attended the panel we co-hosted in September, which is available online for credit from the Wisconsin Nurses Association for one year.
In February, our Executive Director received a personal invitation to a White House meeting where key Wisconsin labor, business, and nonprofit leaders met with USDA and federal policymakers to discuss priorities for our state. And in March we advocated on the hill to ensure those priorities continue to be heard.
FEDERAL GAINS
SOLUTIONS FOR POLLUTION - RAISING AWARENESS

We came together to demand the EPA protect health by enacting a suite of strong pollution safeguards as quickly as possible (our EPA ‘to-do’ list). In February, HCW’s Kelly DeMarco, Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, Representative Lisa Subeck, and Senator Melissa Agard received TV coverage when they connected transportation to health and advocated for EPA clean car standards as part of that effort.

In April, we co-hosted a health equity panel on the EPA’s particulate matter standard. And in May, we organized a press conference near the Elm Road and South Oak Creek coal plants, in response to the EPA’s historic proposal to cut carbon pollution from power plants. Speakers expressed support and called on the EPA to expand the proposal to cover more plants, to protect more Wisconsites, especially those living in frontline communities that suffer the greatest harm from air pollution and climate change.
Our health professionals submitted over 360 comments and testified before the EPA to provide health expertise. Our members met with medical societies and nonprofits to grow support for strong pollution safeguards from the EPA. We were part of the national effort which delivered more than 1 million comments to the EPA demanding historic cuts to power plant pollution.

As someone who lives with asthma... My very health and survival depend on others caring enough to put strong safeguards in place.

As a pulmonologist I see the impact of particulate matter pollution every day. My patients with chronic lung disease have immediate and direct impacts on their health whenever particulate matter levels are high. There is only so much an individual can do about the air they breathe when they walk out their door.

Air pollution is literally killing us. Do something.
To grow public awareness and support for strong pollution policies for clean air, safe water, health equity, and a liveable climate, our health professionals were featured in 36 articles and wrote 4 opinion editorials and 2 letters to the editor. We were interviewed on radio programs across the state and were featured on 5 TV stations in Milwaukee, 3 TV stations in Madison, and 5 TV stations in La Crosse.
In 2026 alone, the Good Neighbor Plan will have the following public health benefits:

- **Federal Gains**
  - **TWO EPA WINS BUILD A PATH TO BETTER HEALTH**
  - Cut asthma symptoms by 1.3 million cases
  - Prevent ~1,300 premature deaths
  - Avoid 2,300+ hospital & emergency visits
  - Avert 430,000 school absence days

From 2024 to 2038, the Methane Safeguard will:

- **METHANE SAFEGUARD**
  - Prevent 80% of methane emissions
  - Avoid 16 million tons of VOC emissions
  - Cut 590,000 tons of air toxics
  - Yield $97 to $98 billion in climate health benefits

Climate change is a significant public health threat but I’m privileged to work with a group of enthusiastic, compassionate health professionals at HCW that care as much as I do about this challenging problem, which gives me hope.

*Claire Gervais, MD*
*Mother. Family Doctor. HCW Board Member.*

Claire's Reflects on Good Neighbor Plan >>
We finished the year strong with a December press conference, and we’ll continue to push the EPA in 2024 to finalize more health-protecting safeguards.

Check out our Solutions for Pollution e-book which celebrates the federal advocacy of our members.

GET THE E-BOOK >>

We were part of the national effort which delivered more than 1 MILLION comments to the EPA demanding historic cuts to power plant pollution.
To help Wisconsinites see the on-ground benefits of climate policy, we celebrated the 1st anniversary of the Inflation Reduction Act by highlighting projects and investments we’re seeing across our state.

Congresswoman Gwen Moore and Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson joined us to celebrate federal funding of Milwaukee Harbor’s Living Breakwater Project, a flood resiliency measure.

We also received an invitation to President Biden’s celebration of clean energy manufacturing jobs at Ingeteam.
In Madison, Congressman Mark Pocan, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, and Dane County Executive Joe Parisi highlighted the benefits of the federally funded Efficiency Navigator Program, which provides energy efficiency upgrades for affordable multi-housing units.

**LA CROSSE**
Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski spoke beside Dr. Amy Kalkbrenner to commend the health and climate benefits of electric bus funding in La Crosse.

**GREEN BAY AREA**
Senator Baldwin joined HCW at Brickstead Dairy to celebrate how federal funding of climate-smart agricultural programs will continue to benefit the health of soils and Wisconsin farming families.

**SEE MAP FOR MORE WINS IN WI >>**
In March, we presented at a national conference. Then we celebrated Rene’ Settle Robinson, DPM, and Valeria (Dee) Hairston, DPM, two HCW members who graduated from the Medical Society Consortium’s Climate and Health Equity Fellowship.

HCW members also published research and articles to educate health colleagues. Some highlights are below:

Calling Attention to Opponents of Climate Action in Climate and Health Messaging

*The Lancet Planetary Health*
Joel Charles, MD, et al.  
[See article >>](#)

Join the Conversation: Talking About the Health Consequences of Global Heating/Climate Destabilization

*Wisconsin Medical Journal*
Bruce Krawisz, MD  
[See article >>](#)

Imagining Eco-Wellness: A Scoping Review of Interventions Aimed at Changing Individual Behaviors to Promote Personal Health and Environmental Sustainability

*Wisconsin Medical Journal*
Brandon Kim, MD, MPH, & Bruce Barrett, MD, PHD, et al.  
[See article >>](#)
Both the 5th National Climate Assessment and the 2023 Lancet Countdown sounded the alarm on how climate change is damaging human health. However, data also shows the transformative health benefits that could come from the transition to a zero-carbon future, with health professionals playing a crucial role in the process. HCW’s Joel Charles weighed in on the report findings, sharing how climate has impacted his life and patients on WUWM Radio. [Hear the interview>>]
I donate and volunteer because HCW is a powerful group of health providers across the state that has made a lasting impact in the climate movement already, and we are just getting started. By investing in climate action, we are investing in the health of our communities for generations to come.

Brittany Keyes, DPT, PT, ATC
MOTHER. PHYSICAL THERAPIST. HCW BOARD MEMBER.

The climate health emergency is here, but together we can build resilient communities. A gift today creates a brighter tomorrow and is critical to bringing our programming to life. Support our work to bring a safe climate, clean air, and better health to your family and neighbors.

**Click Here to Donate >>**

### Income

- Individual Donations: 3%
- Events: 9%
- Public Funding: 17%
- Foundations: 71%

### Expenses

- Administration: 5%
- Programs & Outreach: 95%

- CE Events
- Climate-Smart Healthcare
- Beloit Project
- Clean Energy
- State Advocacy
- Climate Wins Here
- Solutions for Pollution
- Energy Justice
- And more!
THANK YOU
SHARE YOUR HEALTHY CLIMATE WISCONSIN JOY

WE CHANGED OUR LOOK IN 2023

BUT OUR PASSION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE REMAINS THE SAME.
SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD.

SHOP THE HCW STORE >>
Complex challenges require multifaceted solutions. HCW frequently works in coalition to amplify diverse perspectives and foster collective action. We believe that solidarity will pave the way to a brighter future.

HCW is part of the following coalitions and working groups:

- Clean Economy Coalition of Wisconsin: We are on the Steering Committee and Communications Table
- Climate Action Campaign Wisconsin Table
- Climate and Health Communications Collaborative: We are on the Steering Committee
- Coalition for More Responsible Transportation - Wisconsin
- Energy Burden Working Group
- Fossil Free for Health: We are on the Steering Committee
- Love My Air Wisconsin
- Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health (MSCCH): We are part of their State Network, State Leadership Group, and Climate-Smart Healthcare Working Group.
- National Academy of Medicine Decarbonizing Healthcare Collaborative
- Our Future Milwaukee Coalition
- Renewable Network
- Re-Amp Network
- Stop Line 5 Working Team
- Wisconsin Climate Table

We’d like to give a special shout out to the following groups who worked closely with us on projects this year!

- 350 Wisconsin
- Action for a Climate Emergency
- Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
- Citizen Action of Wisconsin
- Climate Action Campaign
- Faith in Place
- Groundwork Milwaukee
- Healthcare Without Harm
- Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate
- Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action
- National Wildlife Federation
- Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter
- Thriving Earth Exchange
- UW ICEP
- Western Wisconsin Health
- Wildwood Clinic
- Wisconsin Environmental Health Network
- Wisconsin Nurses Association
As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with admiration for the incredible compassion of our dedicated health professionals and staff. Their tireless commitment to protecting Wisconsinites and their patients has not only advanced a healthier and more just climate but has also cultivated a sense of community. It is heartening to witness the camaraderie and support we can provide one another when we are united by a shared passion for a better world where everyone feels valued. Thank you to each and every health worker who has contributed to our shared mission. Let’s continue igniting hope, building friendships, and transforming our state. Together, we are creating a legacy of positive change.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Abby Novinska-Lois, MPH, CPH
HCW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR