

Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Maryland Department of Health



November 1, 2024



Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Maryland Department of Health, Climate Implementation Plan required by Executive Order, “Leadership by State Government: Implementing Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan”

In accordance with Governor Moore’s [Executive Order 01.01.2024.19](#), “Leadership by State Government: Implementing Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan,” the Maryland Department of Health affirms its commitment to:

- Work to address climate change and ensure a just transition to a clean economy;
- Advance environmental justice by working to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change for underserved and overburdened communities, including the application of Justice40 goals, initiatives, and funding;
- Equitably implement all existing laws, regulations, and policies related to climate change, incorporating robust community and stakeholder engagement; and
- Continue to maximize federal funding opportunities on climate.

The Maryland Department of Health hereby submits its own Climate Implementation Plan (CIP) to demonstrate its commitment to a whole-of-government approach to addressing climate change and fully implementing Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan.

Part 1: Agency Actions Under the Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan calls on the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to:

Apply for federal funding - Under the leadership and coordination of the Governor's Federal Office, all agencies will apply for federal funding to implement actions that support the achievement of this plan. State agencies will work closely with local governments, nonprofits, and community-based organizations to ensure Maryland is competitive for federal climate action implementation funds and to build capacity for local-level implementation. State agencies will offer support to Maryland's businesses and private sector to ensure they are competitive for historic federal investments.

Starting in 2024, MDH will ensure that all eligible projects are registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to help maximize federal funding. MDH will identify opportunities to stack and braid tax credits with existing funding, grant opportunities, other federal programs, loans, and/or other financial products. (More below.)

Part 2: Recommending Actions to Address Climate Change

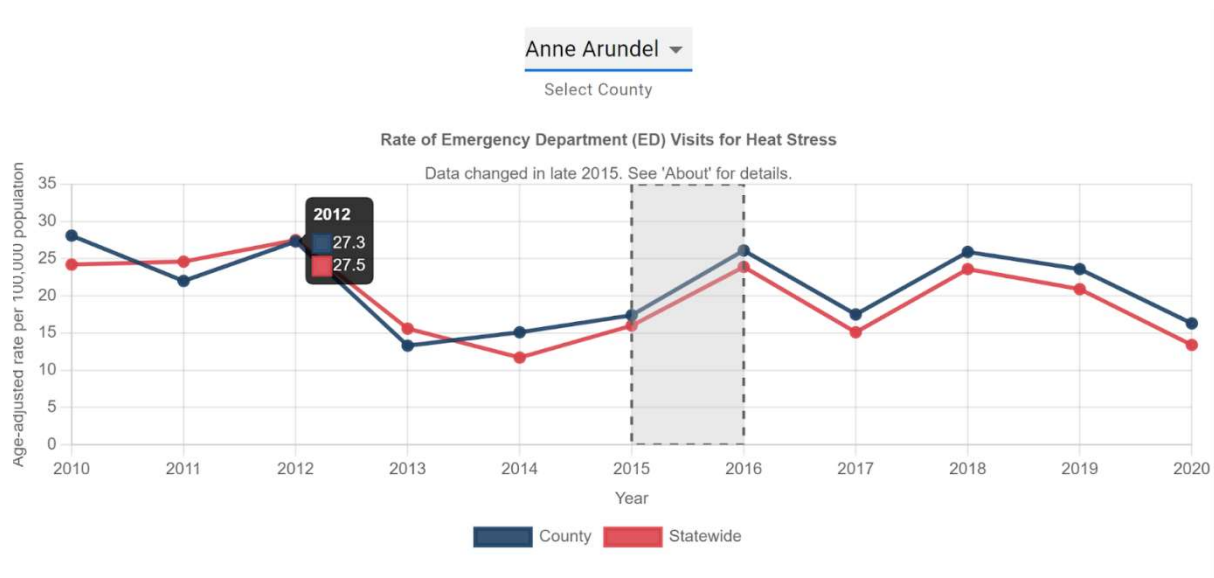
State law (MD Code, Environment, § 2-1305) requires that each State agency shall review its planning, regulatory, and fiscal programs to identify and recommend actions to more fully integrate the consideration of Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goal and the impacts of climate change. The review shall include the consideration of (i) sea level rise; (ii) storm surges and flooding; (iii) increased precipitation and temperature; and (iv) extreme weather events. Furthermore, each State agency shall identify and recommend specific policy, planning, regulatory, and fiscal changes to existing programs that do not currently support the State's greenhouse gas reduction efforts or address climate change.

In compliance with the law, MDH is taking or recommending the following actions to more fully integrate the consideration of Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goal and the impacts of climate change, adapted from the [Next Generation Adaptation Plan from the Adaptation and Resiliency Work Group](#):

Priority 1: MDH and Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will improve the availability, quality and access to green spaces in at least three communities, utilizing available health data and expertise at the state and local level to support green space programming.

1. By 2026, with support from the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC), create a list of communities prioritized for health-informed greenspace improvement using information from programs such as DNR’s Park Equity Mapper, DNR’s Program Open Space, the 5 Million Trees Initiative, MDA’s small farm and urban agriculture program, MDH [Environmental Public Health Tracking \(EPHT\) Program](#), and the MCCC Steering Committee (Next Generation Adaptation Plan, p. 49).
2. By December 2026, hold listening sessions and targeted engagement meetings with community members, leaders and partners to understand specific health and greenspace needs to inform pilot program development. Identify locations for greenspace enhancement or expansion (informed by community needs and wants, the EPHT portal and other health priority areas as identified by MDH), within the prioritized communities.
3. By December 2029, implement the pilot recommendations above.

Figure 1: Rate of Emergency Department Visits for Heat Stress by Year, as shown in the [Maryland Environmental Public Health Tracking Portal](#). Accessed October 24, 2024.



Priority 2: MDH will create an expanded surveillance program through the State's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program to display data on direct and indirect health impacts attributable to climate change.

Maryland's [Environmental Public Health Tracking](#) (EPHT) Program displays data on health and the environment, social and biological drivers that shape health outcomes, and programs to improve health outcomes. The data portal has several measures related to climate change, including heat-related emergency department visit rates over time.

1. Starting in 2025, MD EPHT will create a Technical Advisory Committee, host at least one webinar, and develop the EPHT data portal to inform programs and decision-making related to current emergency alert systems (MDH-heat, MDEM-weather, MDEair quality and others). It will improve or better coordinated alert systems to increase preparedness of the public, reduce health impacts from climate and increase awareness of climate's impact in Maryland (Next Generation plan, p. 51).
2. By 2025, integrate health data from EPHT portal, or the portal itself, with climate dashboards of another agency. EPHT and MDH have already started to share data with the Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) Climate Vulnerability and Environmental Justice tools (e.g. asthma, heart attacks, and low birthweight).

Priority 3: MDH, in partnership with subject matter experts, will update the Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report (CHPR), with planned updates to the report every 5 years (contingent on obtaining additional resources).

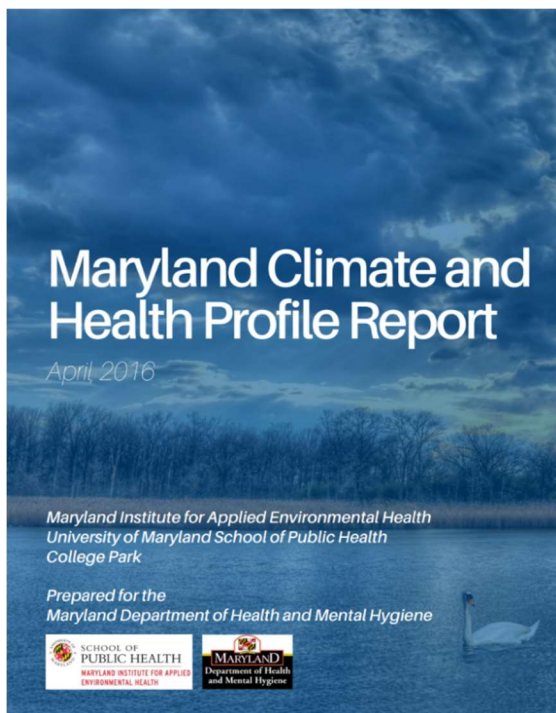


Figure 2: Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report, April 2016.

1. By April 2025, identify a potential academic partner to lead efforts to update the CHPR. By December 31, 2025, secure funding to update the Climate and Health Profile Report. CHPR should be expanded beyond the 2016 CHPR Scope, which only included assessment of health outcome data, to be more holistic in its representation of the climate and health profile of Maryland.
2. By July 1, 2026, establish a steering committee for regular updates to CHPR, to ensure alignment with known needs around climate and health.

Priority 4: Develop best practices for integrating climate and equity considerations into a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) process.

1. By July 1, 2026, assess the existing policy and programming around the state addressing climate and health considerations. This should include policy (health in all policies, occupational health and safety, operational, and other policy arenas as identified), research (university and federal partners), programmatic (cooling/community needs) and educational efforts by state agencies, local governments, community groups and nonprofits.
2. By December 31, 2026, evaluate existing climate and health education and communication capacity in the state to inform best practices for state agencies, local governments, non-profits, schools, community groups and others, about integrating climate and health considerations into efforts.

Priority 5: As this Climate Implementation Plan is executed, MDH will continue to work with MDE to address climate change with Maryland's whole-of-government approach.

1. In compliance with the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, continue to make climate a key consideration in long-term planning of policy and the agency's operations, in partnership with MDE.

Priority 6: MDH will work with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to help maximize external funding opportunities to address climate in Maryland.

1. Starting in 2024, coordinate with DBM to make sure that all eligible projects are registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to help maximize federal funding opportunities.
2. Starting in 2025, identify opportunities to utilize the IRS Elective Pay program to stack and braid tax credits with existing funding, grant opportunities, other federal programs, loans, and/or other financial products to help bridge the gap between traditional items procured and the green premium of climate-smart items.

Priority 7: MDH will work with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) on transportation demand management.

1. Starting in 2025, work with MDOT to receive and disseminate materials that help state employees understand the alternative transportation options available to them which align with the State's goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled and harmful air pollution.

Priority 8: MDH will work with the Department of General Services (DGS), which is responsible for procuring and managing construction projects for MDH, on the following items related to climate-smart operations, buildings, and procurement for MDH facilities:

1. Comply with DGS' plan for infrastructure investments including building out critical infrastructure such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, increasing energy efficiency, and supporting projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Adopt and implement DGS' electric policy for renovations and construction of MDH facilities.
3. Engage and manage Energy Performance contracts for MDH facilities where feasible.
4. Adopt policies to strategize and implement green purchasing in accordance with DGS' Office of State Procurement guidelines.
5. Implement goals to attain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification for new construction.
6. Train at least one procurement officer as a green purchasing specialist.
7. Create a facility operations policy that maximizes energy efficiency. Include items such as optimized building temperature set points with weekend, nighttime, and holiday temperature turndowns (the utilities have free programs and low cost training to help building managers maintain efficiency), prohibition of space heaters, etc.
8. Include decarbonization in Project Justification submissions.
9. Adhere to and promote any other policies adopted by DGS for infrastructure investments towards greenhouse gas emissions reduction.
10. Provide timely and complete data to DGS' database contractor to track our progress.

Priority 9: MDH will help the Maryland government lead by example by improving our vehicles and buildings.

1. Starting in 2025, evaluate how quickly MDH vehicles can be transitioned to zero-emission vehicles.
 - a. MDH will analyze where charging infrastructure could be added to support the transition to electric vehicles.

- b. MDH will identify vehicles that meet any special needs or standards for our agency.
 - c. MDH will identify and coordinate any training needed by State mechanics to properly maintain the vehicles.
2. Starting in 2025, evaluate our buildings for the potential to host clean energy generation technologies like solar panels, solar hot water, ground-source heat pumps, etc.

Priority 10: Support the state's 5 Million Trees Initiative through interagency coordination with MDE and DNR. Evaluate opportunities to plant trees, especially in urban and underserved areas where urban heat island effect is most prominent.

1. Continue to pursue additional opportunities to contribute to the planting and maintenance of native trees on MDH land.
2. Continue to identify and promote opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement.

Part 3: Considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Impacts on Disproportionately Affected Communities

State law (MD Code, Environment, § 2-1305) requires that each State agency, when conducting long-term planning, developing policy, and drafting regulations, shall take into consideration: (1) the likely climate impact of the agency's decisions relative to Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals; and (2) the likely impact of the agency's decisions on disproportionately affected communities identified according to the methodology adopted under § 1-702 of the Environment article. Furthermore, Governor Moore's Executive Order 01.01.2024.19 requires each agency to report on how the agency will advance environmental justice by working to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change for underserved and overburdened communities.

In compliance with the law and Executive Order 01.01.2024.19, the Department of Health is taking the following steps to meet these requirements.

- MDH provides input to MCCC through several advisory bodies on which the Department serves: the Commission for Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, Children’s Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (MDH and MDE are the statutory Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively), and through the MDH Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD).
- MDH also serves on the Smart Growth SubCabinet and Smart Growth Coordinating Committee (which is changing its name to Sustainable Growth), to integrate health data in priority funding area decisions with data tools such as EPHT, the MDE Environmental Justice Screening Tool and Climate Vulnerability Score tool.
- For capital projects, MDH will work to develop infrastructure investment projects located in certain low-income, climate vulnerable communities.
- For capital bond grants, MDH will promote the consideration of disproportionately affected communities for establishing priorities.

Part 4: Resources for Implementation

Implementing Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

Top priorities for MDH in the coming year include:

- Working with MDE to supply data on asthma, heart attack, and other health conditions needed for Just Communities, Environmental Justice mapping.
- Integrating heat and climate data into Environmental Public Health Tracking portal.
- Establishing process to update 2016 Climate and Health Profile report.
- Working with the DGS, MDE and DNR to strategize, develop and engage in projects that promote the reduction in GHG emissions.

To fully achieve all priorities outlined above and meet the ambitious goals of Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, MHD estimates the following staffing capacity would be required:

- **Priorities 1-4:** MDH will need to leverage existing staffing or hire new staff to support activities related to stakeholder engagement and analysis. Increased staff

capacity will be required to work with partners, host convenings (listening sessions, engagement meetings, webinars), and create groups like the MD EPHT Technical Advisory Committee, and assess policy, programming, education and best practices related to climate and health. This will require at least 1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) position.

- **Priority 5:** MDH anticipates needing to hire 1 FTE policy analyst to make climate a key consideration in long-term planning, policy and operations, in partnership with MDE and DGS.
- **Priority 6:** MDH will need a fiscal staff/grant specialist (at least 1 FTE) to apply for federal funding, coordinate with DBM to ensure that all eligible projects are registered with the IRS to help maximize federal funding opportunities and identify opportunities to utilize the IRS Elective Pay Program.
- **Priority 7:** MDH has allocated time from existing staff in our Central Services Division to work with MDOT on transportation demand management. No additional resources are required at this time.
- **Priorities 8-10:** MDH will need to hire additional support within Operations to work on DGS's plan for infrastructure investments, adoption of DGS' all-electric policy for MDH facilities, manage Energy Performance Contracts and energy purchase contracts, maintain databases for tracking and reporting to DGS, create a facilities operations policy to maximize energy efficiency, create project justifications for decarbonization and adherence to other policies adopted by DGS. MDH anticipates needing 1 FTE procurement officer trained as a green purchasing specialist; 1 FTE contract monitor for green purchasing, performance and decarbonization contracts; 2 FTE construction project manager to oversee projects under DGS' implementation of DGS' CIP that impact the MDH fleet and facilities; and 1 FTE dedicated to developing grant applications for funding to support the decarbonization of MDH infrastructure and manage, track and report on the agency's progress.

In addition to the personnel resources, implementing DGS' policies across all facilities and properties within MDH real property portfolio will require significant funding.

Implementing this Climate Implementation Plan

Currently, there are no funds dedicated to climate change within the Maryland Department of Health. The CDC-funded EPHT project has limited funds to support some small epidemiologic and/or programmatic activities. The Next Generation Plan anticipates that additional resources would be required to carry out recommended

activities, particularly the updates to the Climate and Health Profile Report. Additional resources will be required to implement the changes in policies adopted by DGS for infrastructure investments. To meet MDH's goals under Governor Moore's Executive Order and implement Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, MDH projects eight additional personnel, in addition to other resources, will be required.

Part 5: Outcomes from Implementation

Through the implementation of the activities outlined above and a continued commitment to a whole-of-government approach to addressing climate change and meeting Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goal, the Maryland Department of Health expects to see the following outcomes:

- Improved air quality.
- Fewer heat-related health emergencies experienced by residents.
- Decrease in respiratory disease severity (including asthma) in the population.
- Decrease in prevalence of cardiovascular disease.
- Decrease in incidence of heart attacks.
- Reduced incidence of low birthweight in live births.
- Reduced mental health impacts (e.g. depression) attributable to environmental changes.
- Improved access to green spaces for residents.
- Increased public preparedness for climate impacts.
- Reduced community burden and disparities due to the impacts of climate change for underserved and overburdened communities.
- Increased use of climate-smart items, vehicles and infrastructure procured and used by the Department to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Increased clean energy generated by MDH through technologies like solar panels, solar hot water, ground-source heat pumps, etc.