

# The Quorum

## July 2023: The Climate Crisis is Heating Up

As a scorching heat wave makes its way through California and the US, we are once again reminded of the tangible impacts of the earth's shifting climate. The first week of July was the hottest week in world history. Water temperatures in the Florida Keys hit a record 97 degrees Fahrenheit. As of the time this article is being written, Death Valley, California is on track to hit the highest temperature ever reliably recorded on planet earth—131 degrees Fahrenheit. For children, the impact of this heat is even more acute as their relatively large surface area causes them to get overheated much more easily than adults. This is only going to become a bigger challenge. A 2022 report from UNICEF detailed that by 2050, nearly every child in the world will face frequent heat waves.

As we examine national and state lawmaking, there are a number of key climate policies that require continued advocacy, to help get them passed and/or implemented.

Most famously, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) offers incentives, programming, and funding to support the transition to a clean energy economy. It earmarks \$370 billion for climate funding and is expected to double the carbon reduction pace. Through the IRA, schools are eligible for tax credits that can supplement the cost of heat pumps, solar panels, and battery storage, reducing overall cost by 30-50%. The IRA was signed into law in August of 2022, so now the big challenge is adequate implantation, so that the full benefits of this legislation can be realized.

Building off of these priorities, a critical climate policy that is making its way through the California legislature is SB 394 (Gonzalez)—The Master Plan for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Schools. This bill seeks to create a road map to lay out priority actions “to build climate-resilient, sustainable school facilities, to develop cultures of resilience in and around the schools, and to prepare climate-literate leaders for tomorrow’s California”. It would require the California Energy Commission to engage stakeholders, create a baseline assessment of climate-vulnerable school facilities and school carbon emissions, and provide a policy roadmap to make sure schools can maximize resources that will be coming in from the IRA and other legislation, so that we can make them as sustainable and health-elevating as possible. This bill has successfully passed out of the California State Senate and has made it to the Appropriations Committee of the Assembly.

These policies, as well as many others making their way through the legislature, are all going to be key in making sure that we protect the most vulnerable from the harshest impacts of climate change, while working diligently to stave off some of the climate crisis' worst potential effects. Navigating this historic challenge will require historic effort from pediatricians, and everyone who cares for children.

## References:

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