

OHIO STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution No. 3 – 2025

Introduced by: OSMA Council

Subject: Support for Environmental Justice Initiatives

Referred to: Resolutions Committee No. 1

WHEREAS, the OSMA Student Section proposed Resolution 36 – 2024 Support for Environmental Justice Initiatives at the 2024 OSMA Annual Meeting, which was referred to Council for additional consideration; and

WHEREAS, the OSMA Council created smaller workgroups of Council members to review resolutions referred to it from the 2024 annual meeting; and

WHEREAS, one of the Council workgroups reviewed referred Resolution 36 from the 2024 Annual meeting, agreed that the resolution was appropriate, and added a more detailed definition of environmental justice initiatives from the US Environmental Protection Agency and submitted its recommendations to Council; and

WHEREAS, Council reviewed the recommended language by the workgroup, directed staff to include the definition of environmental justice initiatives according to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and then approved the amended resolution language to be submitted to the House of Delegates at the 2025 OSMA Annual Meeting; and

WHEREAS, environmental justice is defined by the HHS in 2024 as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies¹; and

WHEREAS, environmental injustice is the increased exposure to pollution and other environmental health risks, limited access to environmental services, and loss of land and resource rights that are disproportionately experienced by low-income communities and communities of color²; and

WHEREAS, due to historic redlining and other racist housing policies, communities of color are often located near heavily polluted areas, with Black people 75 percent more likely to live near facilities that produce hazardous waste⁵; and

WHEREAS, concentrations of known toxic and carcinogenic metals are nearly 10 times higher in racially segregated communities⁶; and

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48 **WHEREAS**, Black, Hispanic, and Native American people experience higher
49 rates of negative health impacts with extreme heat events and temperature fluctuations
50 than their White counterparts⁷; and

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52 **WHEREAS**, according to the 2021 Health Value Dashboard, Ohio is ranked 43rd
53 out of 50 states and D.C. on environmental metrics related to air quality, water quality,
54 and toxic substance exposure³; and

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56 **WHEREAS**, in an environmental justice policy scorecard, the Northeast-Midwest
57 Institute ranked Ohio as one of the lowest states in the Midwest due to its lack of
58 legislation on environmental justice⁴; and

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60 **WHEREAS**, Michigan’s Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
61 has an Office of the Environmental Justice Public Advocate with its own funding and
62 staff that is dedicated to advancing environmental justice in the state⁸; and

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64 **WHEREAS**, the Biden-Harris Administration granted \$2 million in funding for
65 environmental justice projects in Ohio through the U.S. EPA’s Environmental Justice
66 Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement⁹; and

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68 **WHEREAS**, Ohio House Bill 429, a bill introduced in the 2022 legislative session
69 by Representatives Casey Weinstein and Stephanie Howse, sought to launch
70 environmental justice programs and build clean energy policy that recognizes equity for
71 historically marginalized communities, but it failed in committee¹⁰; and

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73 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Kenneth L.
74 Parker, established a new environmental justice initiative for the district in October 2022
75 to enforce environmental laws and prosecute violations leading to discriminatory
76 environmental and health impacts¹¹; and

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78 **WHEREAS**, the AMA has policies recognizing the harmful impacts to health that
79 environmental pollution and destruction may have and supports the development of
80 environmental committees as well as programs to combat racism (H-65.952; H-135.
81 931; H-135.932; H 135.973; H-135.969; 135-997); and

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83 **WHEREAS**, the OSMA “encourages the development of policy to combat climate
84 change and its health effects in Ohio and to mitigate the undesirable environmental
85 conditions that damage Ohioans’ health” (Policy 27 – 2022); and therefore

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87 **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the OSMA recognizes environmental justice, as defined
88 by the US Department of Health And Human Services in 2024, as the fair treatment and
89 meaningful involvement of people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in
90 the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations,
91 and policies; and be it further

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RESOLVED, that the OSMA supports state action to address and remediate environmental injustice and environmental conditions adversely impacting health, particularly in marginalized communities.

Fiscal Note: \$ (Sponsor)
 \$ (Staff)

References:

1. United States Health and Human Services. "Environmental Justice." *US HHS*, 4 May 2023, <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/environmental-justice/index.html#:~:text=Environmental%20Justice%20is%20the%20fair,laws%2C%20regulations%2C%20and%20policies..> Accessed 1 Nov. 2024.
2. "Environmental Justice Factsheet." *Center for Sustainable Systems*, University of Michigan, 2023, css.umich.edu/publications/factsheets/sustainability-indicators/environmental-justice-factsheet. Accessed 30 Nov. 2023.
3. Health Policy Institute of Ohio. "2021 HEALTH VALUE DASHBOARD." *Health Policy Institute of Ohio*, Apr. 2021.
4. Griffin, Nicholas. Scorecard of Environmental Justice Policies in Northeast-Midwest States. *Northeast-Midwest Institute*, July 2022.
5. Lazaroff, Marissa. *The Crossroads of Environmental Racism and Public Housing*. The Ohio Environmental Council, 2020.
6. Kodros, John K., et al. "Unequal Airborne Exposure to Toxic Metals Associated with Race, Ethnicity, and Segregation in the USA." *Nature Communications*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1 Nov. 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-33372-z>.
7. Berberian, Alique G., et al. "Racial Disparities in Climate Change-Related Health Effects in the United States." *Current Environmental Health Reports*, vol. 9, no. 3, 28 May 2022, pp. 451–464, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-022-00360-w>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2023.
8. A "Office of the Environmental Justice Public Advocate." *Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy*, State of Michigan, www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/environmental-justice. Accessed 1 Dec. 2023.
9. EPA Press Office. "Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$2 Million for Environmental Justice Projects in Communities across Ohio as Part of Investing in America Agenda." *US EPA*, 24 Oct. 2023, www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-2-million-environmental-justice-projects-0. Accessed 1 Dec. 2023.
10. Weinstein, Casey, and Stephanie Howse. Regards Clean Energy and Energy Justice. 21 Sept. 2021, www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/134/hb429. Accessed 1 Dec. 2023.

11. U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Ohio. "Southern District of Ohio | U.S. Attorney Parker Launches Environmental Justice Initiative." *United States Attorney's Office Southern District of Ohio*, US Department of Justice, 4 Oct. 2022, www.justice.gov/usao-sdoh/pr/us-attorney-parker-launches-environmental-justice-initiative. Accessed 1 Dec. 2023.
12. AMA Policy: Environmental Contributors to Disease and Advocating for Environmental Justice D-135.997
13. AMA Policy: Racism as a Public Health Threat H-65.952
14. AMA Policy: 135.024MSS Environmental Health Equity in Federally Subsidized Housing
15. AMA Policy: Stewardship of the Environment H-135.973
16. AMA Policy: Environmental Health Programs H-135.969

OSMA Policy:

Policy 27 – 2022 – Recognition of Climate Change as a Threat to Ohio's Health

1. The OSMA encourages the development of policy to combat climate change and its health effects in Ohio and to mitigate the undesirable environmental conditions that damage Ohioans' health.
2. The OSMA encourages education of the broader Ohio medical community to the serious adverse health effects of climate change and local conditions of climate variation.

Policy 09 – 2019 – Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

1. That the Ohio State Medical Association supports efforts at the state level for expansion of renewable sources of energy.