



*We Will Empower Bold Change to Elevate
Human Flourishing.SM*

For Immediate Release
April 18, 2024

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CHA Members Advance Environmental Sustainability in The Communities They Serve

In observance of Earth Day 2024, the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) is proud to highlight its members' important contributions to advancing sustainable initiatives in the communities we serve and reducing the environmental burden of the health care we provide.

On Thursday, April 25, CHA will host a webinar, [Food Strategies that Care for Creation](#) in honor of Earth Day. The seminar will feature food strategy experts from [Practice Greenhealth, the leading membership organization for sustainable health care](#), and discuss how changes in food procurement, a focus on plant-forward menus, and food waste management can help health care organizations meet sustainability, equity, and community health improvement goals.

Driven and inspired by our mission to care for all of God's creation, Catholic Health Care institutions are working every day to mitigate and eliminate the negative health impacts of climate change and environmental degradation:

Ascension made a [public commitment](#) to reduce carbon emissions by 50% as of 2030, with the ultimate goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions and zero waste by 2040. This commitment is supported by Ascension's 'three pillars' to reach its net zero goals: Net Zero Places, Responsible Supply Chain, and Healthy Communities. By increasing operational efficiencies, focusing on the source of goods purchased, and recognizing the relationship between sustainability and social determinants of health, Ascension is demonstrating leadership in environmental stewardship within the health care sector.

Additionally, [Providence St. Joseph Health](#) aims to be net carbon negative by 2030, while CommonSpirit has also [pledged](#) to cut its operational emissions in half by 2030, and has set a goal of [removing more carbon from the atmosphere than it generates](#) by 2040 – going a step beyond in aiming to become carbon negative. As part of the hospital's mission of environmental stewardship, CommonSpirit has appointed climate ambassadors who serve as volunteers throughout the ministry that advocate for climate control initiatives in their hospitals.

[Avera Health](#) is taking concrete steps to reduce waste, as well as its carbon footprint. For example, Avera's health system uses a variety of sensors and automation to save energy and has moved exclusively to LED lighting due to its substantially longer lifespans.

Trinity Health's undertaken initiatives over the past several decades to construct and renovate various facilities to be more energy efficient, with the system funding such projects with approximately at [\\$35 million annually](#). Trinity Health St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor in Michigan for example [decreased](#) its natural gas consumption by 28%, its electricity use by 29%, and its water use by 57% between January 2004 and January 2021.

Through efforts coordinated by a collaborative council of multi-disciplinary stakeholders across their system, Bon Secours Mercy Health (BSMH) implemented system-wide sustainable initiatives that earned [environmental excellence awards](#) from Practice Greenhealth, including eliminating the use of desflurane as an anesthetic gas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to these impressive strides, CHA members have emphasized [comprehensive sustainability approaches](#), focusing on eco-friendly procurement, reducing energy consumption, and transitioning to renewable sources. Their collaboration with sustainability organizations like Practice Greenhealth and [Health Care Without Harm](#) ensures ongoing learning and sharing of best practices, setting a high standard for the entire health care industry in environmentally responsible health care.

CHA is forward-thinking when it comes to addressing the challenges posed by climate change. In September 2022, CHA [provided testimony](#) for the House Ways and Means Committee hearing on “Preparing America’s Health Care Infrastructure for the Climate Crisis,” emphasizing the need for the health care sector to address the underlying environmental causes of poor health by prioritizing funding for clean energy initiatives, promoting climate-resilient communities, and engaging with vulnerable populations to build a healthier future.

In her [testimony](#), CHA’s Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy Lisa Smith urged Congress:
“Given the scope and magnitude of the ecological crisis and its impact on health and the health system, it is imperative that policy makers, communities and health care providers work to prioritize, fund, and implement changes that protect the health of our communities and prepare the health care system to deliver care in increasingly unstable conditions.”

CHA is a proud partner of the [Laudato Si’ Action Platform](#), which is bringing together the global Catholic Church to embark on a journey spanning over seven years towards complete sustainability. This initiative is driven by the holistic concept of integral ecology, which recognizes that truly sustainable and just solutions to the environmental crisis must include changes to economic, political, social, and ethical systems.

For Catholic health care organizations, environmental sustainability is increasingly seen as a core value, responding to the biblical command to care for creation. That’s why CHA continues to proudly support public health imperatives to prevent disease and improve community health, furthering our mission call to defend and promote human life and dignity, care for the poor and vulnerable and steward the earth’s resources.

To read more about CHA’s environmental and sustainability initiatives, please click [HERE](#).

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The Catholic Health Association of the United States is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest nonprofit provider of health care services in the nation.

- *1 in 7 patients in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital each day.*
- *Catholic health care, which includes more than 2,200 hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations, serves the full continuum of health care across our nation.*
- *Learn more at www.chausa.org.*