

# STATE CLIMATE HEALTH PROGRAM EXTREME WEATHER RESILIENCE FUND

Sponsored by Representative Kristina Ortez and Senator Liz Stefanics

The health and well-being of New Mexicans is increasingly at risk because of climate change. We must take immediate action to protect our people and communities from its ever-worsening impacts.

## THE ISSUE

- **New Mexico is getting hotter.** The average annual temperature has increased 2.7° F since 1970. Night time temperatures are increasing even faster than daytime temperatures.<sup>1</sup>
- **Extreme weather events and conditions are increasing.** These include heat waves, wildfires and associated smoke, poor air quality, severe storms and flooding, water contamination and scarcity, drought, agricultural disruptions, and more disease-spreading insects like mosquitoes.
- **Climate change is a health equity issue.** Addressing climate change is essential to protecting the health of all, and especially those most at risk – our children, communities of color, older adults, people with disabilities, and families earning low incomes.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- New Mexico now has an average of 50 more days of extreme wildfire risk conditions than in 1970.<sup>2</sup>
- Emergency room visits for heat-related illness in New Mexico more than doubled between 2009 and 2019, and doubled again between 2019 and 2023.<sup>3</sup>
- About 80% of the Rio Grande Basin was in moderate to extreme drought conditions at the end of October 2024, when the Rio Grande River Basin had the warmest and 25th driest October since 1895.<sup>4</sup>

## THE SOLUTION

- Creating the **State Climate Health Program** (\$1.1 million) at the Department of Health to build capacity and expertise, support development and implementation of communications (warning systems and culturally appropriate health education), increase community engagement, provide training and technical assistance, and improve interagency collaboration.
- Establishing the **Extreme Weather Resilience Fund** (\$12 million) to assist and enable local and Tribal communities to prepare for and respond to public health risks and threats related to climate change. At least 50% will be dedicated to small communities. Grants will be up to \$1 million (no required match) and can be used to leverage federal or other funds.

If we act now to combine these two approaches with genuine engagement from the communities most affected by climate change, we can transform health outcomes, advance equity, and strengthen climate adaptation and resiliency across New Mexico.

**Organizational Champions:** Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, American Lung Association, Conservation Voters NM, Health Equity Council, Healthy Climate NM, NM Alliance for Health Councils, NM Environmental Public Health Network, NM Interfaith Power and Light, NM Voices for Children

### Endnotes

1. *Confronting Climate Change in New Mexico*, Union of Concerned Scientists, May 2016
2. "Fire Weather: Heat, dryness, and wind are driving wildfires in the Western U.S.," Climate Central, Aug. 25, 2021
3. Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, New Mexico Department of Health
4. October 2024 Drought Report, National Centers for Environmental Information, NOAA; accessed December 2004 from: [www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/monthly-report/drought/202410#reg-rio-gr-rvr](http://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/monthly-report/drought/202410#reg-rio-gr-rvr)

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