

First Do No Harm – Jan 2024 Petition (Full Text)

To: Executive Leadership, US Healthcare Institutions:

On Oct 4, 2023, the National Academy of Medicine announced its [intention to divest its financial holdings from fossil fuels](#) - the most significant health sector response yet to Dr. Dzau's [call to action](#) for health sector decarbonization.

The most revered medical institution in the U.S. is sending an unequivocal message to all health sector institutions: investing in fossil fuels is no longer financially responsible nor ethically defensible, particularly for health sector institutions. We're calling on you to divest your institutional holdings from fossil fuels; they are no longer acceptable in the health sector.

Your fossil fuel investments cause grave harm to human health. [Harvard researchers estimate 1 in 5 preventable deaths worldwide are directly attributed to fossil fuel air pollution](#). Extensive [research](#) links fossil fuels to [asthma](#), neurological disorders, cardiac emergencies, respiratory disease, pediatric cancers, neonatal development disorders, and more.

Your fossil fuel investments exacerbate profound global health [disparities](#), impacting vulnerable populations the most, including pregnant persons, BIPOC populations and, particularly, **children in the global south**. 1 in 3 children in Delhi now have asthma caused by fossil fuel PM2 exposure, debilitating their entire lifespan. Children from Lahore to Lagos to the Bronx face similar life-debilitating consequences from fossil fuels..

Your fossil fuel investments threaten the physical infrastructure of healthcare facilities worldwide and directly threaten the patients we've sworn to protect. Hospitals have been forced to shut, forcing emergency evacuations of [thousands](#) of patients in healthcare facilities [across the the United States, Canada, Italy, Uganda](#), Libya, Bangladesh– and more – due to massive floods, wildfires, heat emergencies and other catastrophic weather extremes all increasing in intensity and quantity due to climate change.

The financial financial burden to healthcare facilities [across the United States](#) is staggering: One recent report estimated that climate-change related disasters cost the US healthcare system \$820 billion dollars [per year](#).

For healthcare services worldwide, this is literally existential: *1 in 12 hospitals are at high risk of climate-related [shut down](#) in the coming decades* - the majority in low and middle-income countries in southeast Asia, the middle-east, and Africa.

Under your authority, our institutions have staggering fossil fuel investments, according to federal reporting: Kaiser Permanente: some \$2 Billion in direct fossil fuel production investments; Providence health system - \$700,000, HCA, CommonSpirit, Johns Hopkins, Ascension, the Cleveland Clinic - each one of you have similar investments in fossil fuels - to cite but a few examples. The Mayo Clinic actually owns several oil production facilities directly.

We cannot accept this as “business as usual”.

The decarbonization efforts at your institutions, including supply chain, surgical waste, anesthesia gasses, solar production and other laudable ‘sustainability’ efforts, while welcomed by us, are fundamentally contradicted by your concurrent investments into Exxon, Suncor, Chevron - the biggest greenhouse gas producers on the planet. It’s time to stop hiding behind “greening the OR” and address the root cause: your own financing of fossil fuels.

We call on you, the executive leadership of fourteen of the largest, most influential health systems in the US, to divest your institutional holdings from fossil fuels including:

- Announce oil, coal and gas exclusion policies for all future financial investments at your institutions, effective immediately. This includes direct investments and bonds in oil, gas and coal extraction industry corporations.
- Establish timelines to phase out existing shares held in oil, coal and gas producers, infrastructure, support services and including public utilities with majority fossil fuel production.
- Demand from your asset managers, including Vanguard, TIAA and others, to rapidly establish fossil fuel exclusion policies for the funds they manage for your institution.

The core of our profession is defined by our commitment to protecting our patients and communities: “First, Do No Harm”. We expect no less from you - our institutional executives. Your financial support to the fossil fuel industry via *our* pension, retirement fund,, and endowment investments, is a direct contradiction to the fundamental oath of healthcare.

In 2024, investing in fossil fuels is the definitive opposite of “Healthcare Without Harm”, which we cannot accept.

We, the Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, Physicians, Residents, Medical and Nursing Students, Patient Care Technicians, Physician Assistants, Radiologists, Anesthesiologists, Respiratory Therapists and many more healthcare professionals - the highly trained personnel at the institutions who staff your facilities - are horrified to learn that our own institutions continue to invest in the industry at the root of such dramatic health dangers and disparities.

The call for health sector divestment is growing. You did it with tobacco. It’s time our health sector divest from fossil fuels now.

Signed
Name
Title:

- Registered Nurse
- Nurse Practitioner
- Physician
- Physician's Assistant
- Resident
- Medical or nursing student
- Other healthcare professiona