

FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 31, 2007

FROM: Todd Sack, M.D., Chair
Environment and Health Section

SUBJECT: Recommendations and Report of the Environment and Health Section

The Environment and Health Section met via conference call on May 31, 2007, and presents the following recommendations and report:

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1:

PROPOSED POLICY ON URBAN
DEVELOPMENT IN MIAMI- DADE

THAT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ADOPT AS POLICY THAT THE FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IS OPPOSED, ON AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH BASIS, TO ANY EXPANSION OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARY (UDB), AND THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SHALL COMMUNICATE THIS ADOPTED POLICY TO FLORIDA GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MAYOR CARLOS ALVAREZ, AND TO EACH CURRENT MEMBER OF THE MIAMI-DADE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS; AND FURTHER THAT THE FMA SUPPORT THE EFFORTS BY MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS TO PRESERVE OPEN SPACES, TO CREATE PUBLIC PARKS, AND TO IMPROVE EVERGLADES ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, ALL OF WHICH ARE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT TO THE HEALTH OF FLORIDIANS.

The Environment and Health Section members discussed the problem of urban sprawl, not only in Miami-Dade, but also in Palm Beach and Broward Counties. The Section believes that the health of Florida's citizens is affected by the quality of Florida's natural environment. Miami-Dade is under pressure to extend the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) further south and west, and this would allow urban development to occupy land that is currently farmland and was formerly part of the Everglades. The Section members feel that the protection of the Florida Everglades is essential for maintaining the quality of Florida's drinking water, and for hurricane and flood protection. They also feel that it is important to protect this land for recreational and natural benefits of the Everglades. The Section believe that further urban sprawl would result in deterioration of environmental public health because it increases automobile driving times which will increase the levels of air pollutants, thereby exacerbating the severity of respiratory diseases. Both surface and ground water quality would be adversely affected by the loss of green space resulting in disruption of the natural hydrologic cycle, increased storm water runoff, and increased potential for waterborne disease outbreaks. In addition, the Section members feel that Miami-Dade County is legally obligated to participate with state and federal efforts to restore the Greater Everglades Ecosystem which could be significantly impacted if the UDB is moved.

Fiscal Note: Can be accomplished with current staff allocations

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN HEALTH

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THAT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ADOPT AS POLICY THAT THE FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION URGE STATE GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP ENERGY USE POLICIES THAT INCLUDE A PLAN TO REDUCE FLORIDA'S PROJECTED CO2 EMISSIONS, TO ADOPT A RENEWABLE ENERGY REQUIREMENT FOR A PORTION OF THE STATE'S ELECTRIC POWER AND TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR TRANSPORTATION, BUSINESSES, HOMES AND APPLIANCES; AND FURTHER

THAT THE FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION URGE THE FLORIDA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO SUPPORT FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO REGULATE CO2 EMISSIONS AND TO REDUCE THE PREDICTED INCREASES IN CO2 RELEASE NATIONALLY AND WORLDWIDE, AND THAT FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION DELEGATION TO THE AMA WORK AT THE AMA LEVEL TO FURTHER THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY.

The Section members believe that man-made carbon dioxide (CO2) is the leading contributor to global warming pollutants released in the United States. It is reported that in 2004 carbon dioxide emissions represented approximately 84% of America's annual contribution to global warming. The United States share of global CO2 is approximately 23% making the US the number one CO2 emitter. Carbon dioxide emissions continue to grow rapidly and is estimated to increase to almost 6.0 billion metric tons annually. The World Health Organization estimates that global warming already claims the lives of 150,000 people worldwide each year due to heat stress, extreme weather events, ozone air pollution and other factors. The warmer conditions that we have experienced in recent years will also increase the frequency of algae blooms along the Florida coast damaging fish populations with adverse impacts on health. The Florida legislature created the Florida Energy Commission to develop comprehensive climate action plans, including greenhouse gas reductions. In the absence of federal CO2 emission limits, it is left to the states to develop the limits, and many states have already done so. The Section believes that the FMA should develop policy to protect Floridians from environmental hazards that will adversely impact their health.

Fiscal Note: Can be accomplished with current staff allocations

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AMA PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

THAT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS DIRECT THE FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION'S DELEGATION TO THE AMA TO SUBMIT A RESOLUTION TO THE AMA ASKING THE COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH WORK IN COALITION WITH MEMBERS OF THE AMA FEDERATION AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO UPDATE AMA POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE SO THAT IT IS CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT SCIENCE, TO HELP PREVENT OR REDUCE CLIMATE CHANGES THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT HEALTH, TO HELP PREPARE CURRENT AND FUTURE PHYSICIANS FOR CLIMATE CHANGES THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT HEALTH, AND TO REPORT BACK BY 2008 AMA ANNUAL MEETING.

The Section feels that since the AMA policy on global climate change was created nearly two decades ago, enough progress has been made that it makes the policy outdated. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that warming of the earth over the past century can be attributed

to humans with a greater than 90% level of certainty, and that global climate change will have a wide range of negative health impacts. The Section feels that there is a basic need for public health infrastructure programs and services to be strengthened and maintained.

Fiscal Note: Can be accomplished with current staff allocations

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Informational Item No. 1:

High Levels of Mercury in Fish

The Florida Division of Food Safety in the Department of Environmental Protection has found that 9% of targeted fish have high mercury levels, more than one part per million, which makes those fish dangerous to eat, especially for pregnant women. The Division is not alerting the public to their dangerous findings, and the Section members believe that this should be considered a public health risk. This is not only in Florida, but in other states as well. California has already posted warnings to their citizens regarding the dangerous levels of mercury in some fish, and they believe that Florida should be the second state to warn the public about this problem. Since the FMA already has policy pertaining to the high levels of mercury that our citizens are being subjected to, the Section will write a letter to the President of the FMA asking him to contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection asking that this information be made public, and that these fish be removed from stores and fish markets.

Fiscal Note: Can be accomplished with current staff allocations