RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THAT
THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS A
HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHEREAS: The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that only a decade remains for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5°C, and even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat, and poverty for hundreds of millions of people; and

WHEREAS: The IPCC report concluded that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would need to be reduced by 45% by 2030, and entirely by 2040 to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change, yet these emissions hit a record high in 2018; and

WHEREAS: 1,299 jurisdictions and local governments in 25 countries have declared a climate emergency, including the Worcester City Council and Amherst Town Council in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and 13,273 scientists from 156 countries named climate change an emergency; and

WHEREAS: More than 100 national public health groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics; Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment; and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health agree that the climate crisis is a health emergency; and

WHEREAS: Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health—clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter; and

WHEREAS: The health threats of climate change include increased exposure to extreme heat, reduced air quality, more frequent and intense natural hazards, and increased exposure to infectious diseases and aeroallergens, nutritional security, effects on mental health, and increased risk of population displacement and conflict; and

WHEREAS: Climate change exacerbates health disparities, disproportionately harming the most vulnerable among us—children and pregnant women, people with low income, the aged, and people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and marginalized people of all races and ethnicities; and

WHEREAS: Children’s health is increasingly threatened from air pollution from fossil fuels, famine, heat, water shortages, and vector borne-diseases from every degree of warming; and

WHEREAS: The burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas for electricity, heat, and transportation is the primary source of human-generated emissions; and
WHEREAS: The Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 requires the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs to establish a statewide limit on GHG emissions of between 10% and 25% below 1990 levels for 2020—on the way toward an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS: National security experts agree that the climate emergency is a “threat multiplier” and a “top homeland security risk”; and

WHEREAS: The City of Boston has a Climate Action Plan to mitigate climate change with plans to implement their recommendations on buildings, transportation, energy supply, and achieving a carbon-free future and for reaching its 2050 carbon reduction goals; and

WHEREAS: Declaring the climate crisis as a health emergency is a crucial first step for aligning residents around the urgency of the global climate breakdown; and

WHEREAS: Declaring that the climate crisis is a health emergency demonstrates that our government agencies acknowledge the truth about climate change and what it demands of us: an emergency response at emergency speed; and

WHEREAS: The health crisis caused by climate change also presents a major health opportunity because building healthy energy, transportation, land-use, and agriculture systems now will deliver immediate and sustained health benefits to all and reduce future health risks from climate change; and THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council affirms that human activity caused the climate crisis and that fossil fuels are the primary cause; and THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council, in a meeting assembled, goes on record and declares and affirms that the climate crisis is a health emergency.

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