



# Engaging Health Professionals on Climate

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2022-23 CLIMATE + HEALTH PEER LEARNING CIRCLE



# Today's Agenda

- Hello & Welcome!
- Role of Health Professionals
- Insights that support health professionals to communicate for climate action
- Climate and health message Framing recommendations
- Wrap Up

## Key Objectives

- Learn about the **role of health professionals as effective messengers** on climate, and the strengths and challenges in engaging them as an audience
- Be introduced to **strategies and other insights** that support health professionals to communicate for climate action to their peers & the public
- Gain an understanding of **key recommendations for framing climate and health messages** that spark engagement



# What is the Climate Advocacy Lab?

# What is the Climate Advocacy Lab?

We equip the US climate movement with the **evidence-based insights, skills,** and **connections** needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions.

## Who We Serve




**3,700+**  
members from  
**1,500+**  
organizations

*From all **50**  
states, DC, &  
Puerto Rico,  
and several  
sovereign  
tribal nations*

**2/3**  
**advocates,**  
*1/3 mix of  
social & data  
scientists,  
funders,  
consultants*

**Over 15% of  
members**  
*(200+ orgs)  
are  
environmental  
& climate  
justice  
organizations*

# How We Do It

 CLIMATE TRUTH.org

May 31, 2016  
**Field Test Comparing Pro-Solar Messengers on Several Channels**

**Summary**

This test sought to determine if a homeowner messenger or a solar worker messenger was more effective in convincing either NV residents or US residents to sign a petition in support of solar net-metering policies. Test results were inconclusive, but our report points to significant shortcomings of Facebook Ads for validating message tests, and points to suitable alternatives.

**Campaign Background**

Last fall, Nevada's Public Utility Commission was considering a proposal from the State's dominant Utility to hike electricity rates for owners of rooftop solar systems. If passed, the proposed rates would severely limit the growth of rooftop solar installations in the state.

Our project objective was to recruit Nevada residents, and those already engaged with US climate advocacy groups, to sign a petition to the Nevada Public Utility Commission opposing the new rates. In addition, we wanted to increase participation by our supporters in a patch-through system that facilitated direct phone calls to the NVPUC.

**Initial Test Design**

Our beginning hypothesis was that engagement rates with messages delivered by homeowners and solar industry workers would result in higher rates of engagement than typical appeals issued by our staff. We based the hypothesis on evidence drawn from response to recent email and social media campaigns where we saw higher engagement rates on content featuring people directly impacted by climate change such as food and wildfire survivors.

Our next step was to scan the Climate Advocacy Lab network for contacts that could help us set up a rigorous test. We set up a call with Dr. Gabriele Wong-Parodi of

## WHAT ACTUALLY MOVES POLICYMAKERS?

We try hard to influence policymakers like elected leaders and other government decision-makers. But do our tactics work? Turns out, our assumptions (such as **more = better**) can be wrong. Here are evidence-based tips for getting through to policymakers, through your supporters and via direct contact.

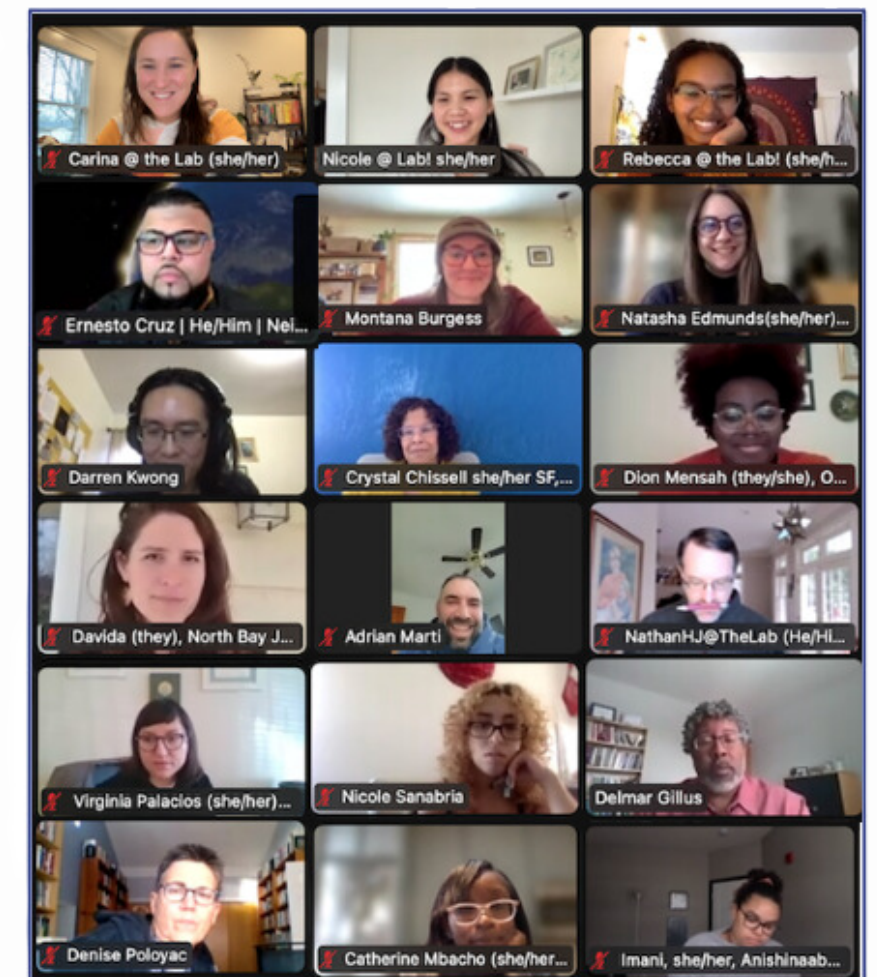


### TIPS FOR GRASSROOTS CONTACT

WHEN SUPPORTERS CONTACT POLICYMAKERS (CALLS, LETTERS, EMAILS ETC.)

- POWER COMES FROM SIGNALING OUR LEVEL OF COMMITMENT**  
The power of constituent contact is how it indicates your "muscle": the depth and breadth of genuine public support. The more effort required of supporters, the stronger the signal. One-click form emails don't signal deep support, but a personalized letter does.
- PRIORITIZE QUALITY CONTACT...**  
Focus on actions that demonstrate passion. Legislators rank in-person visits highest, with one visit making many times the impact of an email.
- ...OVER QUANTITY OF CONTACT**  
Policymakers receiving a high volume of messages see it as driven by organizations, not the grassroots. Emails – especially large numbers of form emails – have much lower influence than other forms of contact (but do encourage supporters to do follow-up contact).
- GOLDBLOCKS ZONE OF AUTHENTICITY**  
Keep the number of calls and emails moderate: too few won't show enough support, but too many can seem inauthentic (for example, NextGen found 15 calls to state legislators more influential than 60; your campaign's best volume will depend on issue and district size).

*"A message received online from 47 constituents is as influential as the same message received from a single constituent in person."  
—Kaiping Chen & colleagues (UW-Madison & Stanford)*



RESEARCH

INSIGHTS

TRAINING

COMMUNITY



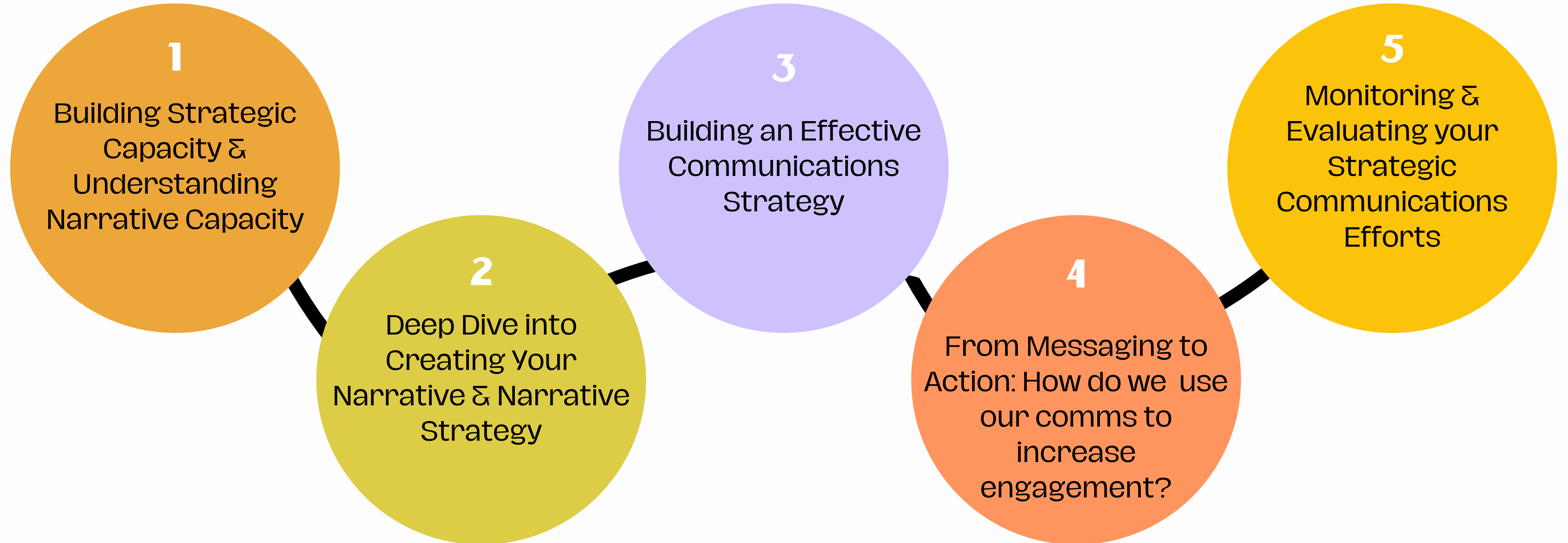
# The Climate + Health Peer Learning Circle

# Our Intention

Share learnings, frameworks, tools and resources and provide ongoing support for **leaders and organizations engaging health professionals on climate.**



# *What We Covered...*





**PSR FLORIDA**  
**PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**  
U.S. affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, recipient of the 1985 Nobel Prize for Peace



**NEW MEXICO PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

**Health Care Without Harm**



**Citizens' Climate Lobby**  
Climate and Health

**NH HEALTHCARE WORKERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION**



**Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai**

**BC CANCER**

**RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

**Marin Community Clinics**

**Project ECHO**



**climate nexus**

**The Medical Society Consortium ON CLIMATE & HEALTH**



**HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE**  
**hphc**



**WASHINGTON PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**EDC Education Development Center**



**CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK**



*Center for Climate Change, Climate Justice, and Health*



## Why Health Professionals? The role of health professionals as effective messengers on climate

# The Health Angle is in fact Compelling



Personal & Universally Relatable Topic	Potential for Storytelling
Emotional Connection	Policy Support
The Impacts are Tangible	Easier to Communicate
Public Health Co-Benefits	Motivation for Action

# Health professionals are credible messengers

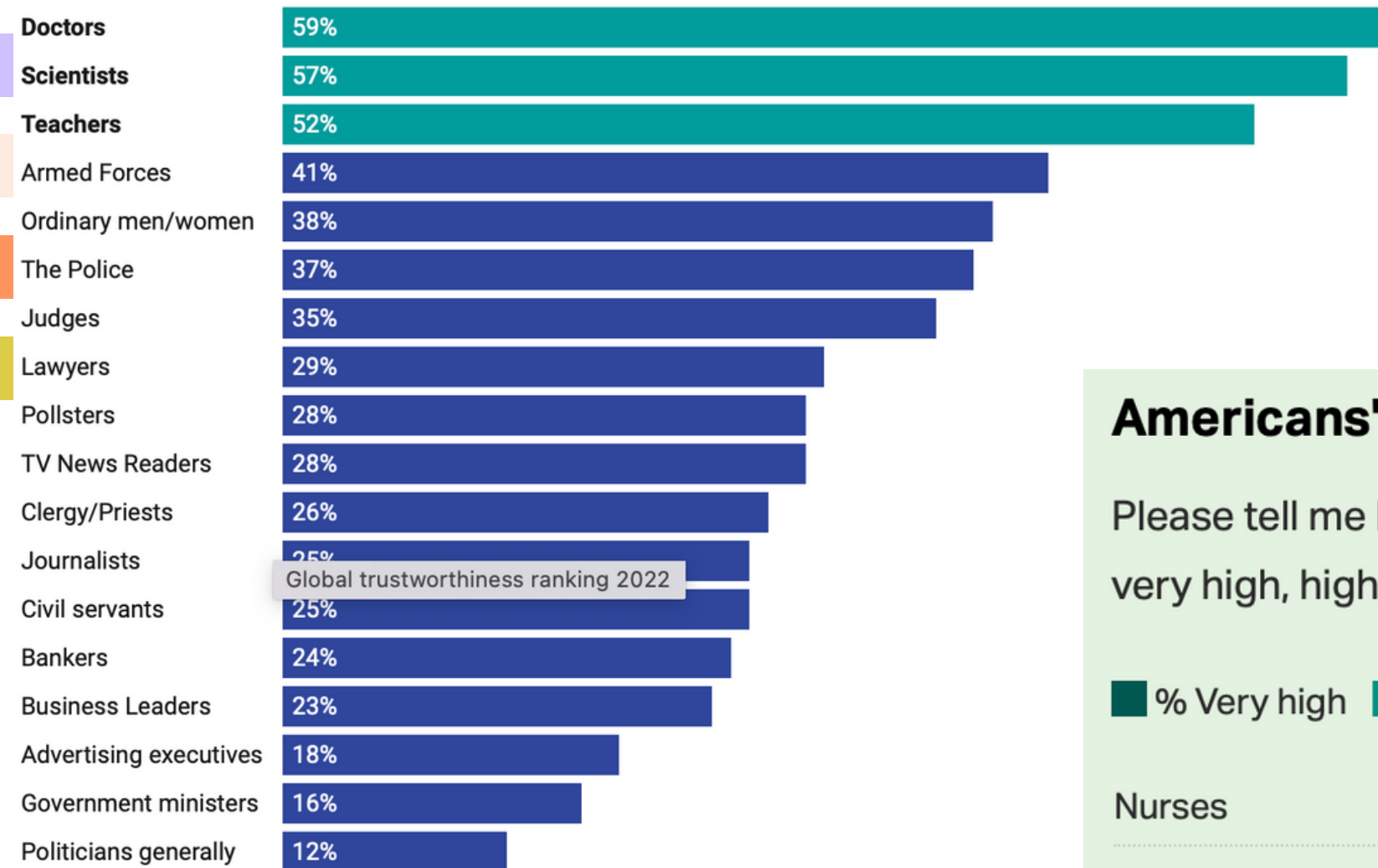
Source credibility: a combination of expertise and trust/reliability.



# Health Professionals Are Trusted Messengers to the Public

## Global trustworthiness ranking 2022

Please look at this list of different types of people. In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy in your country?



Various **surveys and polls** consistently show health professionals rank among the most trusted individuals and sources of information.

## Americans' Ratings of Honesty and Ethics of Professions

Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low or very low?

■ % Very high ■ % High ■ % Average ■ % Low ■ % Very low



# Health Professionals Are Credible Messengers: They have expertise

While health professionals typically have extensive education and training, which gives them specialized knowledge and expertise in their field, their **first-hand experience** and positionally provides credibility as well.

First-hand Experience

*They see the every day impacts on their patients and can share then (like I've seen the rate of asthma increase...)*



ANHE  
@enviRN

ANHE member and ER nurse Mariah Landry comments in the [@ajc](#) how the [#InflationReductionAct](#) will support important programs to help eliminate the pollution that worsens patients' health outcomes. Read how [#ClimateWinsHere](#) in the full op-ed below!





**What do we know about health professionals as an audience?**

# Findings from the Lab's Academic Literature Review & 2022 Climate + Health Interviews

## Overview

**Research Question:** What strengths, weaknesses, and challenges exist for climate+health advocates in their **capacities to effectively communicate for climate action?**

### WHO?

Member-based organizations engaging health professionals on climate change in the US

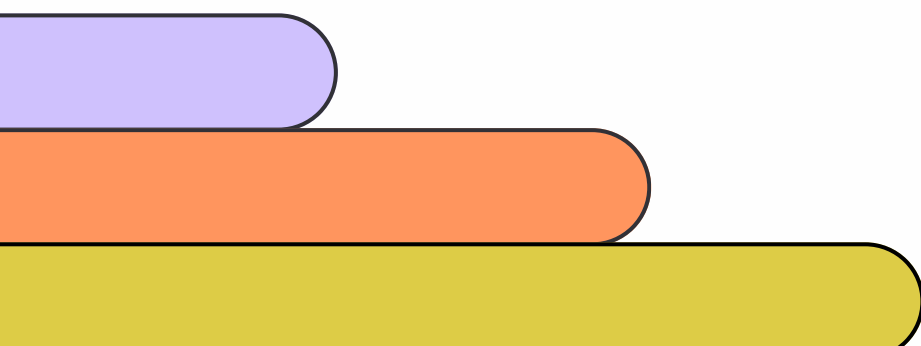
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment (C-CHANGE)
- Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action
- Partnership for Southern Equity's Climate Change, Health and Equity (CCHE) Dept.
- Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
- EcoAmerica
- Climate Health Now
- Healthy Professionals for a Healthy Climate
- Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health



# Audience: What do we know?

Health professionals are concerned about climate change

- Widely believe **climate change is happening** and is causing/will cause health problems
- Many **feel a responsibility to help**



## Audience: What do we know?

# Main barriers to translating health professionals concern into advocacy behavior

### Perceived lack of knowledge & communication skills

- Some health professionals are reluctant to engage because they feel they lack sufficient knowledge about climate change and health
- Even among the most engaged health professionals, there is a need for more educational resources
  - continuing education (86%), communication training (80%), and materials to educate patients (75%)
- Concerns about lack of communication training creating fear, powerlessness, and lack of agency

### Quote

*“Finding what their story is, being able to package it in a compelling way, knowing to to communicate on it. Overwhelmed that they have to translate complex information. Need to feel more comfortable stepping outside their lane.”*

## Audience: What do we know?

# Main barriers to translating health professional concern into advocacy behavior

### Lack of self-efficacy

"I am capable of acting!"

### Lack of perceived support from professional organizations and leadership

#### Quote

*We want more orgs to understand that any health professional can talk about this as an expert and is valid to speak to health impacts, doesn't have to be an old physician with a white coat and a stethoscope. This creates imposter syndrome within health professionals, and they feel like they don't have enough knowledge/expertise to talk about it.*

#### Quote

*[Climate change] can be seen as political and health providers are supposed to be non political, right? But since we've made it such, there's just a lot of hesitancy from people speaking publicly. We are all employees or affiliated with health care institutions, and some of them are really, really strict and can be punitive if you're speaking and they don't like what you're saying.*



# Insights that support health professionals to effectively communicate for climate action





# Building Efficacy



## Efficacy

- **Self-efficacy:** “I am capable of acting!”
- **Response efficacy:** “Politicians will listen!”
- **Collective efficacy:** “We are more powerful when we act together!”
- **Collective response efficacy:** “Solutions will work!”

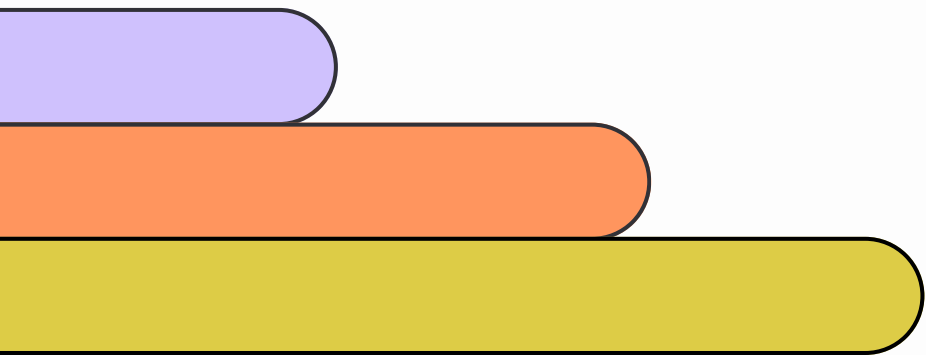
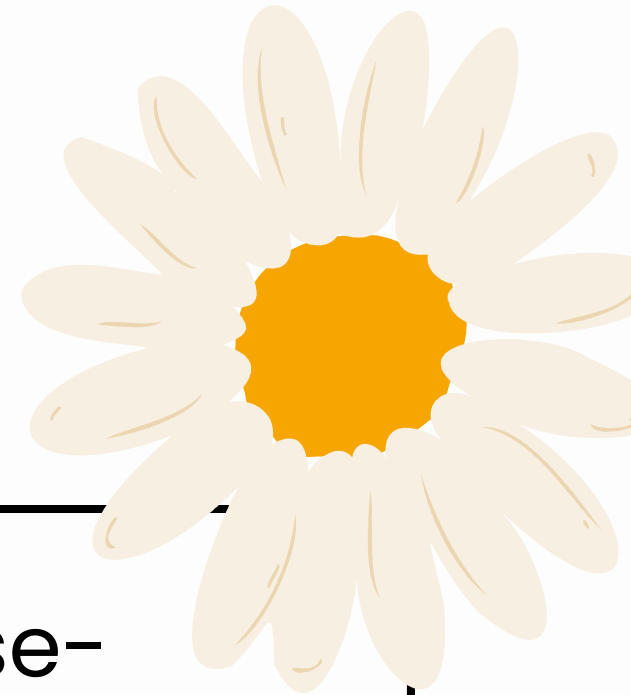




# *Building Efficacy*

Try something like this (it hits all three forms of efficacy):

*"Your voice matters [self-efficacy], so make sure it's heard [response-efficacy]. We are more powerful when we act together! Join us [collective efficacy] at our town hall meeting next week so that we can demand the leaders at our hospital to take action on climate."*





# *Tap into existing identities and reinforce activist identity*



## **Identity Formation Theories**

- We look at our *\*past actions\** and create an identity for ourselves based on how we have acted historically
- We create an identity for ourselves based on *\*who we want to be\** (and *\*how we want others to see us\**) and then take actions that align with that identity





# Reinforce activist identity through goal-setting, reminding people of past actions



Dear [INSERT NAME]---As an adviser to the National Association of Doctors, I've appreciated how you've shared your thoughts on the health system with us in the past. I thought of you when I saw this email that National Association of Doctors sent earlier in the week. Signing this pledge gives you the chance to stand up for your values that you expressed when you wrote that:

you want reform that "provides a basic level of coverage for all Americans and those in need without discrimination on basis of race, socioeconomic status, ability to pay, etc."

Whether or not you agree with how health reform has progressed, signing this pledge gives us the chance to recommit to our values and reclaim our role as physicians. Will you do it?

*“People who received personalized goals messages were almost three times as likely to sign the petition as those who received the standard message.”*





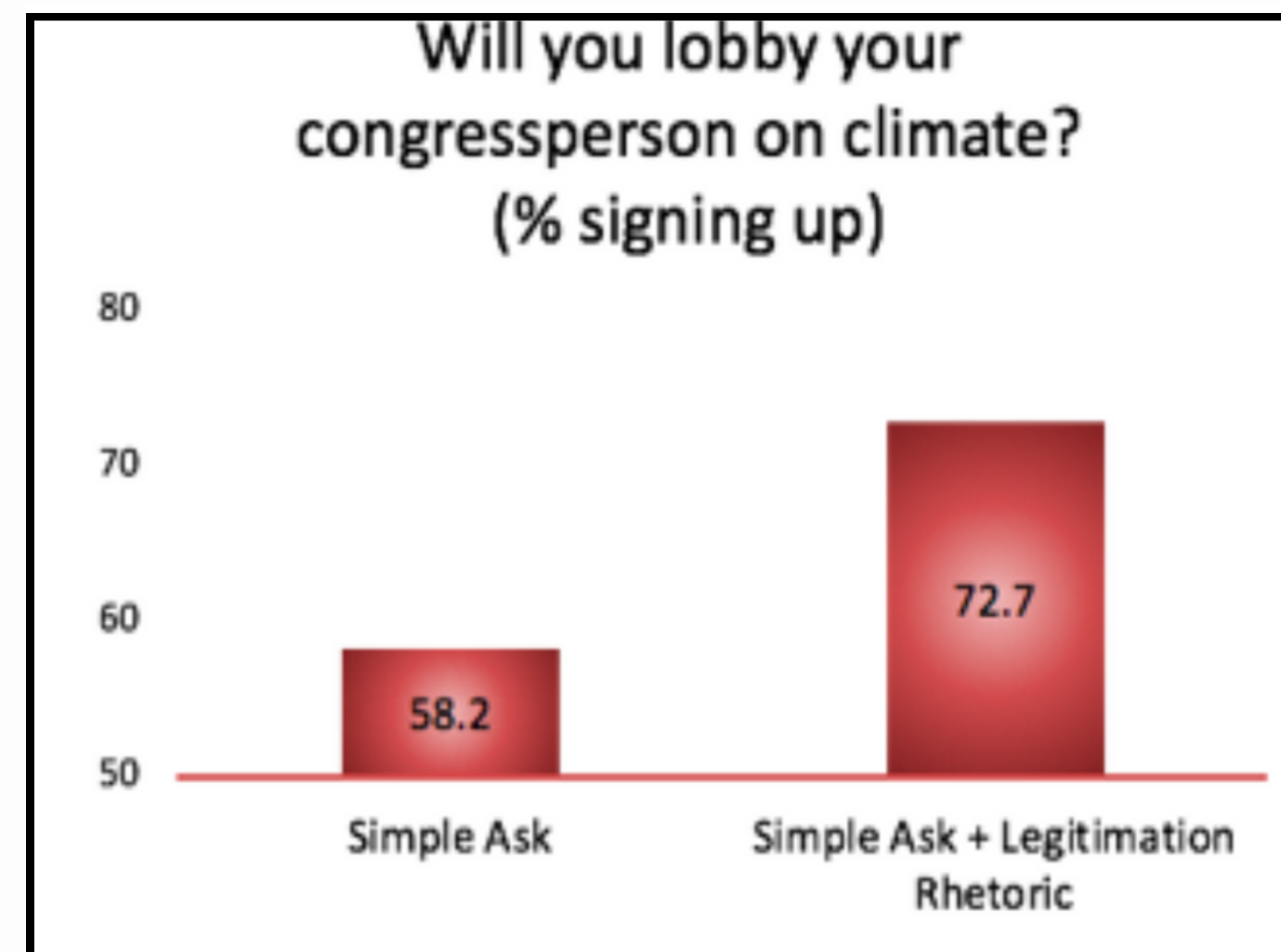
# Using Legitimation Rhetoric



## Legitimation Rhetoric

- Characteristics of “risky political action”:
  - Unfamiliar, uncertain outcomes
  - Social interactions with unpleasant and/or hostile people

*Will you help lobby your local Congressperson? **Please know that many people tell us they feel nervous about taking this on. It’s entirely understandable if you feel the same way. But** it’s important to do...*





# *Using Legitimation Rhetoric*

[First, acknowledge that the action could be uncomfortable/scary] "Please know that many people tell us they feel nervous about taking this on."

[Then, affirm your leader's feelings.] "It's entirely understandable if you feel the same way. But..."




EXAMPLE:

I know that as health professionals, we're often encouraged to stay in our lanes and not speak out on issues that may seem controversial to others, **BUT** as health professionals, it is our responsibility to protect the health and well-being of the people.



# Leverage the power of Social Norms (aka peer pressure)

- Most Americans underestimate the extent to which other Americans care about climate change and support action taking (pluralistic ignorance)
- "Social norms," or the idea that other people like you care, is an incredibly powerful social/behavioral force
- Social norms are ways of setting implicit expectations for how people act.



**Physicians + Climate**  
@physiciansdocare

You are not alone. A growing number of 76% physicians agree that we should take a leadership role in encouraging offices, clinics, and hospitals to be as environmentally sustainable as possible.

Like Comment Share



## Leveraging *Shared Values*

Lead with feelings, not facts; reference shared values

- “I know you really care about childhood asthma...”

Connect identity to community that shares their values

- For health professionals, “care” and “compassion” for their patients or for the communities they serve can help them find their “in” to the movement who are also “caregivers” of the planet



Physicians + Climate  
@physiciansdocare



At Grace Hospital, we show up for our patients daily, however best we can. We’re calling on our staff to take leadership in the climate movement to help protect our patients.

[#ProtectOurPatients](#) [#TeamGrace](#)



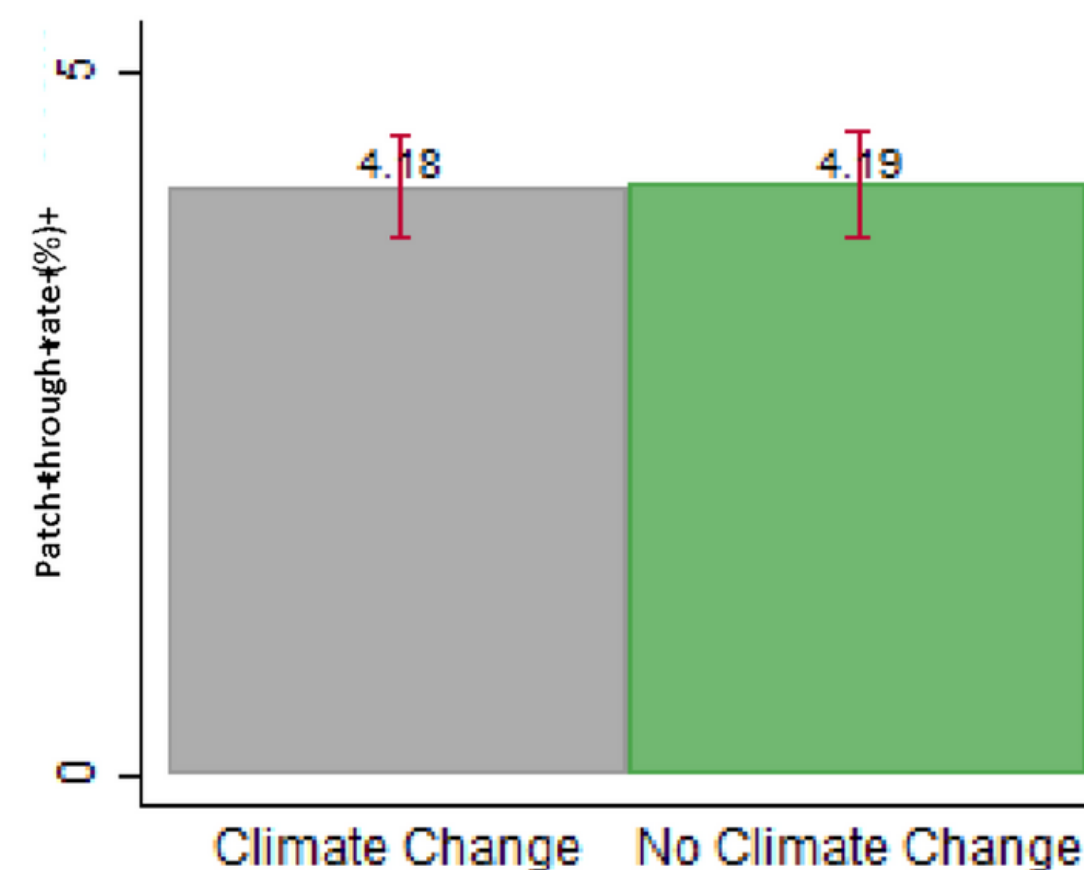
# *Climate & Health Message Framing Recommendations*



# Messaging wisdom: Message strategy can have an impact (not little wording tweaks)

- In tests, people were equally likely to act regardless of whether the script mentioned...
  - “climate change”
  - “scientific research”
  - “in the US” vs. “in [state]” impacts\*
  - “Recurrent flooding” vs. “Sea level rise”
- But framing in terms of “Free Market” vs. “Higher Rates” vs. “Health” DID matter

Targets were equally likely to patch regardless of whether the script men; oned climate change



\*Other research paints a more complicated picture

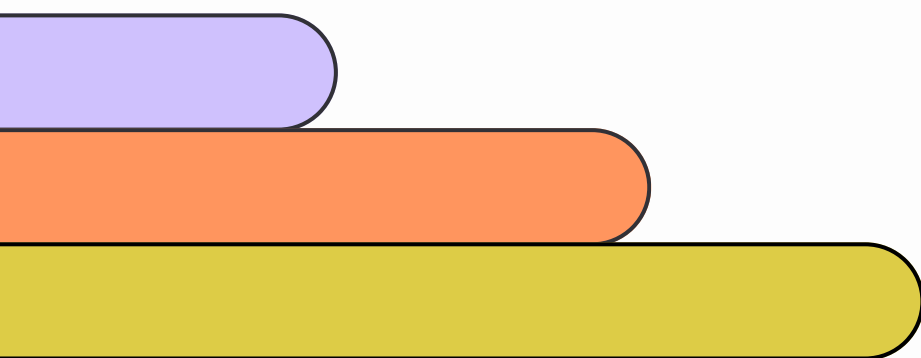


## *Messaging wisdom: Customize for audience*

- No one “magical message frame”
- Consider your audience (how they self-identify, what issues that care about, etc.)
- Use messages that match their motivations



**Our niños need clean electric school buses**





## *Framing climate change as a health issue*

- Overall, a frame about the **health impacts of climate change *alone* is ineffective** at moving policy support or behavioral intentions (but works moderately for liberals and those already concerned)
- In contrast to health harms, **framing in terms of health benefits works.**
- Combining a health frame with messaging about **climate solutions that evoke efficacy** is more effective than a health frame alone.
- Health and climate messages presented as **people-centered stories and lived experiences** are more effective.





**Thanks For Joining**

Special thank you to our funders,  
Arthur Vining Davis Foundation!