

Communicable Disease Infrastructure Budget Request Fact Sheet

The County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) and the Health Officers Association of California (HOAC) request a continuing appropriation of \$50 million General Fund beginning in FY 2019-20 to improve the local health department infrastructure to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases.

Background

California's 61 local health departments (LHDs) are mandated to prevent and control the spread of communicable diseases throughout the state. LHDs play a unique and critical role in outbreak investigations and disease control in order to protect the public's health and safety, a responsibility for which no other entity is responsible.

Local health departments employ a variety of strategies to prevent and/or reduce the spread of infectious diseases, including:

- Education and outreach to at-risk communities and health care providers
- Intensive disease investigation and contact tracing
- Public health laboratory testing
- Epidemiologic surveillance

Issue

California local health departments do not have adequate funding to fulfill their unique mandate to prevent and control infectious diseases within their jurisdictions. State and federal funding for communicable disease control activities have considerably declined over time and are primarily siloed based on the disease. This has led to significant challenges in addressing the rising rates of ever-present diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and tuberculosis, as well as new and emerging outbreaks experienced in California such as Hepatitis A, influenza, Zika and measles, posing a health and safety risk to residents throughout the state.

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH):

- Nearly 360,000 cases of communicable diseases were reported in 2016

- In 2016, an estimated 5.8 million cases of foodborne illness occurred in California, leading to nearly 400 deaths
- An estimated 1.1 million to 4.3 million cases of influenza occurred in 2016, leading to an estimated 1,400 to 6,800 deaths
- California has experienced a 45 percent increase in chlamydia, gonorrhea and early syphilis since 2012
- Early syphilis has increased by 600 percent since 2012, 283 children were born with syphilis, and 30 stillbirths occurred due to syphilis
- The 2017 Hepatitis A outbreak resulted in 704 cases, 461 hospitalizations, and 21 deaths

Communicable disease risks are further exacerbated by key issues facing Californians, such as the alarming number of Californians living in unsanitary or congregate settings due to homelessness or natural disasters.

Solution

Local health departments request a continuing appropriation of \$50 million General Fund to improve infrastructure to prevent and control the spread of infectious disease in California using strategies that best meet the needs of local jurisdictions. Examples of these strategies include disease surveillance, contact tracing, staff development and training, education and outreach to the general public and health care providers, clinical services, and laboratory testing.

Additional Information

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