



April 17, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan, M.D.
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services
State Capitol, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: \$50 Million for Local Health Department Communicable Disease Infrastructure

Dear Senator Pan:

The County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) and the Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), representing our state's 61 local health departments, respectfully request your support of a continuous appropriation of \$50 million General Fund beginning in FY 2019-20 to improve local health department infrastructure to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases.

California's local health departments are statutorily mandated to prevent and control communicable diseases throughout the state, including over 80 reportable conditions. Local health departments 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 accountable.

In order to prevent and/or reduce the spread of infectious disease, local health departments employ a variety of intensive strategies, including, but not limited to: targeted education and outreach to at-risk communities and health care providers, disease investigation and contact tracing, public health laboratory testing, and epidemiological surveillance.

California's local health departments do not have adequate funding to fulfill their unique mandate to prevent and control infectious diseases within their jurisdiction. State and federal funding for communicable disease control activities have declined considerably over time and are primarily siloed based on disease conditions. 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 such as Hepatitis A, influenza, Zika, and measles. These challenges experienced by local health departments in addressing communicable diseases poses a serious health and safety risk to residents throughout the state.

California continues to be faced with staggering levels of infectious diseases, placing an enormous burden on the health of residents of our state. According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in 2016, approximately 20 million cases of illness due to communicable diseases were experienced by Californians, causing more than 10 million chronic infections and approximately 10,000 deaths.

CDPH indicates that approximately 360,000 cases of communicable disease were reported to the State in 2016, the bulk of which were sexually-transmitted diseases (over 280,000). California has experienced a 45 percent increase in chlamydia, gonorrhea, and early syphilis since 2012. Also,

since 2012, early syphilis has increased by 600 percent, 283 children were born with syphilis, and 30 stillbirths have occurred due to syphilis.

In other communicable disease areas, an estimated 5.8 million cases of foodborne illness occurred in 2016, leading to nearly 400 deaths. Approximately 1.1 million to 4.3 million cases of influenza occurred in 2016, leading to an estimated 1,400 to 6,800 deaths. Additionally, the 2017 Hepatitis A outbreak resulted in 704 cases, 461 hospitalizations, and 21 deaths.

The figures above point to the significant need of additional local health department resources to investigate, prevent, and control additional transmission of infectious diseases experienced in our jurisdictions. Communicable disease risks are further exacerbated by key issues facing Californians, such as the alarming number of residents living in unsanitary or congregate settings due to homelessness or natural disasters.

This investment would allow local health departments to take critical steps toward improving their infrastructure, which is fundamental to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases. Jurisdictions would have the flexibility to address current infrastructure gaps by dedicating funding to strengthening their staffing capacity, expanding public health clinic services, increasing workforce development and training, delivering provider education and outreach, and enhancing the current level of disease investigation, tracing and surveillance.

We respectfully urge your support of this continuous appropriation of \$50 million General Fund to improve local health department infrastructure to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Gibbons at (916) 327-7540 or mgibbons@cheac.org or Kat DeBurgh at (916) 441-7405 or deburgh@calhealthofficers.org.

Sincerely,

As signed by

Michelle Gibbons
Executive Director, CHEAC

As signed by

Kat DeBurgh
Executive Director, HOAC

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Subcmte. No. 3 on Health and Human Services
Scott Ogus, Consultant, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Anthony Archie, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Kirk Feely, Fiscal Director, Senate Republican Caucus
Karen Smith, MD, MPH, Director, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
Adam Dorsey, Program Budget Manager, California Department of Finance (DOF)
Sonja Petek, Senior Fiscal & Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO)