



Date: May 31, 2018

To: The Honorable Philip Y. Ting,
Chair, Budget Conference Committee

Honorable Members
Budget Conference Committee

From: Michelle Gibbons, Executive Director

Re: **Item HHS 46 – Black Infant Health Program – SUPPORT SENATE
VERSION**

The County Health Executives of Association California (CHEAC) respectfully requests your support of Senate's version of the budget to provide \$15 million to improve infant mortality rates in California.

CHEAC would urge the Budget Conference Committee to approve trailer bill language to establish the California Perinatal Equity Initiative to provide \$15 million for strategies that improve infant birth outcomes and to narrow inequitable gaps in infant mortality rates experienced by African American communities. Funding would be use for: 1) a State grant program to fund clinical providers (e.g., Federally Qualified Health Centers) through local health departments; and 2) to implement enhanced payment mechanisms to incentivize perinatal health efforts. Strategies funded through the grant program would include: 1) screening women for pregnancy intent at every well-woman or chronic disease management visit; 2) implementing or expanding group models of care that integrate woman-to-woman support with health education and clinical pregnancy care; and 3) implementing fatherhood initiatives targeted to partners of women.

Infant mortality is defined as the death of an infant before their first birthday. Studies show that African American communities have historically been disproportionately affected by higher rates of infant mortality throughout the United States, including in California. According to the CDC, preterm birth and low birthweight and maternal pregnancy complications were among the five leading causes of infant death in 2015. On average, there are 31,000 African American babies born each year in California, of which 3,000 to 4,000 babies are born prematurely and/or with low birthweight. African American infants continue to die at more than three times the rate observed for white and Asian infants, the two racial/ethnic groups with the lowest infant mortality rates.

This budget proposal will benefit local health department efforts to reduce the gaps in infant mortality locally. It will build the capacity of local health departments to work with clinical providers, consumers, and local organizations in the design of outreach efforts, while creating effective models that can be replicated. The proposed grants to clinical providers, including Federally Qualified Health Centers, will remove barriers and help facilitate building local capacity to implement perinatal health interventions. The funding to the State also will benefit local efforts by identifying enhanced payment mechanisms to incentivize perinatal health efforts.

It is for these reasons that, we respectfully urge the Budget Conference Committee to adopt the Senate version which would establish the California Perinatal Equity Initiative to improve birth outcomes and to narrow inequitable gaps in infant mortality. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (916) 327-7540.

cc: Andrea Margolis, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Peter Anderson, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Scott Ogus, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Kirk Feely, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Anthony Archie, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Karen Smith, California Department of Public Health