



PASCHAL ROTH
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

1127 11th Street, Suite 824
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-444-7170
@PaschalRoth
paschalroth.com

To: Michelle Gibbons, CHEAC
From: Paschal Roth Public Affairs
Re: 120-Day Communications Report

Below, Paschal Roth Public Affairs provides an update on our work with the County Health Executives Association of California over the past four months. It illustrates significant progress on our 6-month communications plan to position CHEAC and its members as trusted, expert leaders deploying a science-based response to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to outlining work completed to date, we provide a brief description of activities we envision moving forward.

INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC HEALTH

1. **Op-ed:** We worked closely with CHEAC and the Health Officers Association of California (HOAC) to draft an op-ed highlighting the need for investment in the public health system infrastructure to curb COVID-19 and prepare California for future emergencies. The piece was featured by the Sacramento Bee, Modesto Bee and Fresno Bee papers just ahead of the release of Governor Newsom's budget proposal.
2. **Social Media:** CHEAC's tweet on the op-ed caught the eye of journalists and was retweeted by Angela Hart of Kaiser Health News - one of the primary health care reporters covering state policy in California.
3. **Reporter Outreach:** As a result of our media outreach, Ms. Hart reached out for CHEAC's comment on public health funding and raised the issue of public health funding directly to Governor Gavin Newsom at his Friday, January 8 news conference.



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The Sacramento Bee

Opinion

COVID-19 shows desperate need for Gov. Newsom to invest in California's public health

BY KIM SARUWATARI AND PHUONG LUU *SPECIAL TO THE SACRAMENTO BEE*
JANUARY 07, 2021 12:53 PM

As California reckons with the darkest moment of the toughest public health challenge in generations, the new year brings a glimmer of hope. Our local public health departments are gearing up to be a crucial part of a massive mobilization to deliver vaccines against COVID-19, first to those whose jobs, age or underlying health conditions put them at greatest risk, and then to every Californian.

It's a monumental challenge, and one made harder than necessary because California has for too long neglected our public health infrastructure. This is why we make an urgent plea to Gov. Gavin Newsom as he finalizes his budget proposals for California: Invest in public health.

Californians should have no doubt that we will get the job of delivering vaccines done, but they should also be clear-eyed about the urgent need for investments to effectively fight COVID-19 and future pandemics.

Fifteen years ago, California created a standalone state department to oversee public health programs, including lab services, chronic disease prevention and infectious disease control. Over the last ten years, however, the budget for the California Department of Public Health has



declined from [\\$3.4 billion](#) to [\\$3.1 billion](#) while state spending has grown from [\\$125 billion](#) to [\\$202 billion](#).

Simultaneously, the federal government has neglected public health. Nearly [75% of the budget for the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) goes to states and local communities, and its budget has remained flat. Temporary funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act last year, and recently extended, provided a short-term lifeline.

With local health departments on the frontlines of administering public health programs, we need to chart a new course. It is critical that California heavily invests funding from the new federal coronavirus relief package in local health departments and continues to assess and fund ongoing coronavirus response needs and public health infrastructure.

Without adequate funding, local health departments will have to close testing facilities, resulting in delays. Local health departments will have to let go of contact investigators and tracers, impeding the ability to intervene and control the spread of the virus and limiting our ability to target the areas of greatest need. Local health departments will also have to eliminate temporary housing used to quarantine or self-isolate, jeopardizing recovery efforts and placing the hardest-hit communities at greater risk.

Finally, with the vaccine rollout already underway, local health departments are buckling under the pressure to quickly vaccinate with limited available funding to hire additional staff to do mass vaccination clinics.

Through the years, tough cuts have already been made. Over the past decade, the public health workforce has drastically shrunk and never recovered. That really shows at a time like today.

In Riverside County, for example, a 40% funding decline over the last decade has left just 30 disease investigators, contact tracers and public health nurses to serve the sprawling region of 2.5 million people. In Yuba and Sutter counties, nearly a third of the contact investigators and contact tracers are extra hires with no clear funding past this month.

In the past decade, California has seen a steady hollowing out of our local public health staff. We need aggressive action to reverse this course. By including new investments in public health within his budget proposals, Gov. Newsom can expand our state's capacity to prevent, track and recover from COVID-19. These same investments will help California confront other dangerous diseases when this pandemic is over.

Kim Saruwatari is the director of public health in Riverside County and vice President of the County Health Executives Association of California. Dr. Phuong Luu is the Bi-County Public Health Officer for Yuba and Sutter Counties.

Read more here: <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/article248343030.html#storylink=cpy>

VACCINES MESSAGING

We worked closely with CHEAC leadership and the Executive Committee to develop a set of science-based talking points around COVID-19 vaccines. The talking points assisted CHEAC members in communicating science-based messages to internal and external partners, the media, and elected officials.

CARES ACT FACT SHEETS

We worked closely with CHEAC leadership to develop a template fact sheet around federal CARES Act funding for CHEAC members to communicate the impact an exhaustion of federal funding would have on the local public health system. The fact sheets illustrate the value of public health investment for local COVID-19 response, coronavirus testing sites, contact tracing, and vaccine planning and distribution.

This information will form the basis of news pitches to local and statewide outlets and through social media channels.

MEDIA TRAINING

We provided an intensive media training session for the CHEAC Executive Committee. The training equipped the public health leaders to effectively deliver public health and science-based information via the media, handle difficult questions from the media, and understand the value of regularly communicating with local media.

We also provided one-on-one media trainings for leaders in Madera, Solano, and Riverside Counties in advance of scheduled media interviews.

LOCAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Our media training was well-timed, just as Thanksgiving was approaching and news headlines were warning of a surge of winter COVID-19 infections and a potential “twindemic” coinciding with the seasonal flu. We used these headlines as opportunities to pitch county public health directors to local media outlets in the Central Valley, Bay Area, and Inland Empire Regions. In media interviews, the directors provided science-based public health information regarding safely celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday, vaccine safety and efficacy, and the importance of flu shots.

PUBLIC HEALTH HEROES FOR RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

Our “Public Health Heroes for Recovery” communications campaign will launch in Mid-January; the media and social media campaign will highlight unique partnerships that have formed between local health leaders and community stakeholders who are working together to save lives and supporting counties’ science-based reopening strategies.

We will announce the launch of the campaign via a statewide press release and to draw attention to the CHEAC Twitter account where we will honor community, business, and local leaders who go above and beyond to save lives and aid in California’s recovery.

Here are some examples of the Tweets that will be launched as part of this campaign.

Campaign Launch:

California’s [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) come in many different forms & over the coming months we will highlight unique partnerships between local [#PublicHealth](#) officials & community stakeholders who are using a data and science-based approach to reopen their economies.

|

We will share deep stories about partnerships with community and non-profit organizations, business and labor leaders, and others who are supporting local [#PublicHealth](#) officials to protect our communities and save lives from [#COVID19](#).

|

Along the way, we encourage you to share these stories to demonstrate your support for the local [#PublicHealth](#) system and those serving in their communities to reopen our businesses and schools.

Riverside County:

Vision y Compromiso

CA's communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by [#COVID19](#) due to long-standing systemic health & social inequities. In response, [@RivCoNow](#) developed a partnership Melinda Cordero-Barzaga with [@PromotorasVYC](#) to assist with the county’s response to the pandemic.

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These [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) serve as a trusted community voice where their promotoras – community health workers – are at the center of the [@RivCoNow](#) [#COVID19](#) Road to Recovery strategy.

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Promotoras leverages their community relationships, trust, and respect to function as [#COVID19](#) case managers and also conduct education, outreach, and testing services in their communities.

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.[@PromotorasVYC](#) have held [#COVID19](#) testing services at growing facilities, churches, and in local neighborhoods, supporting [@RivCoNow](#) promise to ensure [#HealthEquity](#) and [#CulturalRelevancy](#).

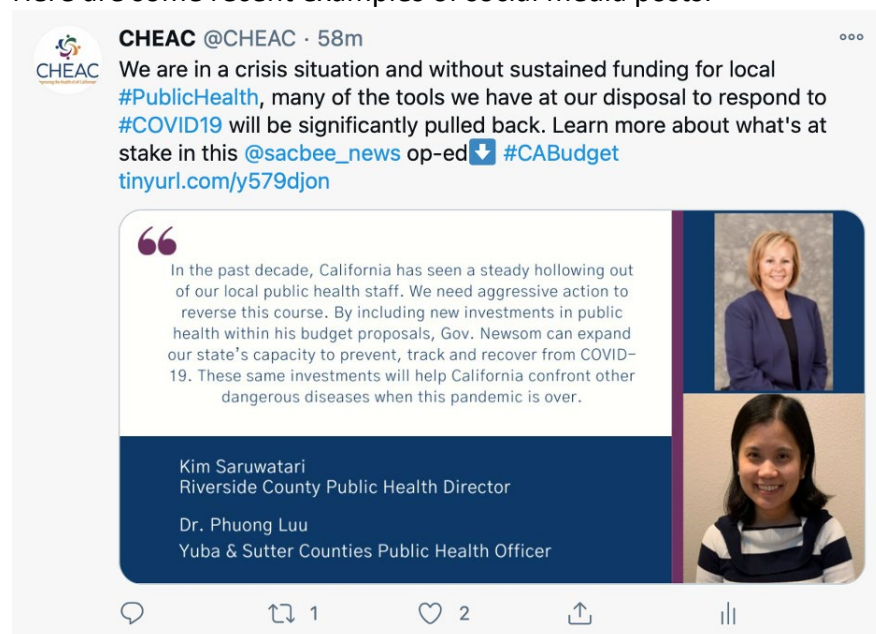
|
We thank these [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) for their support and leadership to protect and serve our most vulnerable communities in partnership with local [#PublicHealth](#) officials.
[@PromotorasVYC](#) [@RivCoNow](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

We continue to develop weekly social media content to position CHEAC and its members as thought leaders and advisors on a broad range of issues covering COVID-19, local and state public health guidance, vaccines and vaccinations, flu season, and safe holiday celebrations.

As a result of these efforts, we have been able to increase CHEAC Twitter followers by roughly 48%. Additionally, we have increased CHEAC Twitter connections by 283% amongst key influencers, including policy makers, reporters and organizations in the healthcare space at the local, state, and national levels, and others engaged in public health issues.

Here are some recent examples of social media posts:





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 **CHEAC** @CHEAC · Jan 1

The stark reality is that [#COVID19](#) is a deadly disease & there's a huge emotional toll not just on [#PublicHealth](#) officials, but on the friends and families that have lost loved ones from this virus. Please continue to stay safe. [@erinallday](#) [@sfchronicle](#)



'Surge upon a surge': Experts fear the dire situation in California hosp...
California is now among the handful of states driving the national surge as cases begin to plateau in other parts of the country, and the next ...
[sfchronicle.com](#)

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 **CHEAC** @CHEAC · Dec 31, 2020

The [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) at [@lapublichealth](#) have a wake up call for us all. The heartbreaking reality is that [#Every10Minutes](#) someone in [@CountyofLA](#) is dying from [#COVID19](#).

We
Can
Stop
This,
Together.

Save a life. Stay home tonight. The life you save could be your own.

 **LA Public Health**  [@lapublichealth](#) · Dec 31, 2020

[#Every10Minutes](#) someone dies of COVID-19 in LA County. People who were loved and will be missed. Until we slow the spread, the next person to tragically pass away could be someone you know.

🗨️ ↺️ 1 ❤️ 2 ↗️ ||



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CHEAC @CHEAC · Dec 30, 2020

While the surge in new [#COVID19](#) cases is alarming, there is hope on the horizon. Safe, effective vaccines will be available to all those who want them in the coming months.



CHEAC @CHEAC · Dec 29, 2020

"We cannot normalize the devastation that is around us, but we can have hope and see a path forward and a way out of this current crisis. We can see that this pandemic will not last forever." - [@SCCGov](#) Dr. Sara Cody in the [@sfchronicle](#)



Coronavirus cases growing at 'staggering rate' in California as deaths...
As the 11-county Bay Area region prepared to come under a stay-at-home order, San Francisco imposed a 10-day quarantine on travelers ...
[sfchronicle.com](#)



NEWS CLIPS

We provide a comprehensive bi-weekly roundup of public health news at the local, state, and national levels. This research is essential to understanding how public health messages are being communicated and covered in the media. It also helps us identify news opportunities for CHEAC, with a particular focus on COVID-19, vaccinations, general public health, and CHEAC members in the news.



TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS

Ongoing	Identify opportunities to elevate the voices of public health directors and strengthen CHEAC as a media presence with: • Timely press releases/media statements • Interviews with reporters • Social media actions
January 2021	• Conduct “Virtual” deskside briefings on state of public health investment & what’s at stake (CARES Act fact sheet information) • Reporters: Angela Hart w/Kaiser Health News, Melody Gutierrez & Anita Chabria w/LA Times, Sophia Bollag w/SacBee, Victoria Colliver w/Politico, Cynthia Ho w/SF Chronicle, Sammy Caiola w/Cap Pub Radio • Send editorial board memo laying out value of public health investment for COVID-19 and other emergencies • Request editorial board meetings
January 2021 – end of contract	• Launch “Public Health Heroes for Recovery” ◦ Regional news pitches and/or op-eds • Weekly social media announcing public health hero each week
February 2021	• As legislative hearing occur, amplify CHEAC expert testimony press statements and social media
March 2021	One year anniversary of COVID shutdown: • Release statewide report highlighting successes because of the science-based approach • Follow with regional reports. • Echo in op-ed