

Date

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol Building, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Assembly Speaker
State Capitol Building, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for \$200 Million Ongoing General Fund Investment for Public Health Infrastructure and Workforce

The undersigned organizations, representing the California Can't Wait Coalition, stand in strong support for addressing the longstanding erosion of public health workforce and infrastructure and write to request: 1) an investment of \$200 million ongoing state General Fund to support local health department workforce and infrastructure; and 2) your support of AB 240 (Rodriguez) and \$3.45 million for an assessment of the current and future workforce and infrastructure needs.

We have seen first-hand throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the devastation that underfunding local public health departments can have on communities across the state. Local public health departments are the first line of defense against all public health threats, and these departments rely on a highly skilled and specialized workforce are often stretched far too thin. While COVID-19 is the most devastating epidemiological event in recent memory, it is likely not the last of this magnitude and scope. However, one lesson that must not be lost is that local health departments are instrumental in protecting lives and avoiding excess social and economic disruption. Simply put, we cannot continue to neglect this vital role.

A sustainable investment in public health is essential *now* to ensure that a robust public health workforce and infrastructure is in place to contain and minimize not only the next outbreak or emergency, but to continuously improve the health of our communities. Additional sustainable funding will ensure that local public health departments can confront the smaller, yet daily devastating waves of infectious and chronic diseases, which contribute to premature mortality

and crippling morbidity in many regions and underserved communities.

California's local health jurisdictions are battling 21st century public health threats and need appropriate resources to adequately respond to these current and upcoming battles. The COVID-19 crisis demonstrates this reality in the starkest of terms.

For all these reasons, we ask the state to be an integral funding partner and invest \$200 million ongoing state General Fund to facilitate the stabilization of local health jurisdictions so they may address the following key needs and issues that are distinct and separate from COVID-19 responses, including, but not limited to:

- Recruiting and retaining a modern public health workforce, along with sustainable training to build and maintain expertise;
- Improving and expanding communicable disease monitoring, epidemiology, and outbreak mitigation, along with infrastructure improvements;
- Addressing health equity issues and health disparities through a wide variety of action-oriented approaches using meaningful engagement with diverse communities who are impacted by systemic racism; and through integrating public health as a core partner in addressing the social determinants of health;
- Improving and expanding environmental health and environmental justice capabilities for detecting and protecting communities from hazardous conditions in air, water, food, and other settings, and to address the impact of climate change on the diverse communities of California.

While a significant investment in public health workforce and infrastructure is needed *now* after many years of underfunding local health departments, the state must also evaluate adequate and sufficient staffing levels among local health departments. The evaluation proposed by AB 240 (Rodriguez) would create a process to examine and make future recommendations on local public health workforce levels and infrastructure needs.

Our nation has experienced what understaffed and under-resourced local public health departments mean for community spread and outcomes during a pandemic, and California is no exception. We have the opportunity and the obligation to rectify this only with the state's commitment to ongoing funding. **California can't wait** until the next public health crisis hits. California must invest and rebuild the public health infrastructure now.

It is for these reasons that our organizations respectfully urge the Legislature and Administration to include an investment of \$200 million ongoing state General Fund for public health workforce and infrastructure and \$3.45 million for the assessment proposed by AB 240 (Rodriguez) in the 2021-22 state budget.

Respectfully,
List Organizations

cc: The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Honorable Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Marjorie Swartz, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Agnes Lee, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Joe Stephenshaw, Staff Director, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
Scott Ogus, Consultant, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Andrea Margolis, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Keely Bosler, Director, California Department of Finance
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
Dr. Tomás Aragón, Director and State Public Health Officer, California Dept. of Public Health
Angie Wei, Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom