

# #CACantWait

## UNTIL THE NEXT CRISIS

### For Immediate Release

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## May Revision Repeats a Deadly Mistake: Failing to invest in local public health

*Despite record-breaking surplus, budget proposal fails to heed lesson of COVID-19: under preparing for public health threats costs lives; harms communities of color most*

SACRAMENTO, CA — California Can't Wait, a coalition of public health officials, local leaders, frontline workers, and health equity advocates expressed deep dismay that Governor Newsom's FY 21-22 budget includes zero new dollars to rebuild the state's battered local public health departments, despite a record-breaking \$76 billion surplus.

### **Michelle Gibbons, Executive Director, County Health Executives Association of California:**

"The biggest lesson of COVID-19 is that waiting until a crisis to invest in public health costs lives. Astoundingly, this budget would repeat the same mistakes California made before COVID-19, leaving local public health departments too under-resourced and understaffed to address day-to-day public health threats such as the high rates of STDs, increasing rates of tuberculosis cases and chronic diseases - much less facing down a threat like COVID-19.

"COVID-19 exploited the cracks in public health readiness caused by a decade of disinvestment in our public health infrastructure and workforce. Any 'comeback' will only be as strong as our ability to keep kids in school, keep businesses open, keep Californians working, and eliminate health disparities. Investing in local public health underpins each of these goals. We look forward to working with leadership in the Senate and Assembly to ensure this work is funded as part of the final budget package."

### **Bob Schoonover, President, SEIU California and Executive Director of SEIU Local 721**

"California's public health workers risked our lives on the frontlines of COVID-19, and SEIU members have pledged we will never let California return to a place where our communities - especially communities of color - are left so vulnerable in a crisis. Ignoring essential public health functions like disaster readiness and chronic disease prevention is precisely why COVID-19 was so devastating and so unequal. SEIU workers won't let California repeat this deadly mistake."

**Kat DeBurgh, Executive Director, Health Officers Association of California:**

“This is a missed opportunity for investment in public health. California’s local health departments have been losing staff since the great recession, and funds are needed now to make sure California is protected from disease going into the future.”

**April Jean, Policy Director, California COVID Justice Coalition, Public Health Advocates**

“Public health infrastructure and workforce is a critical piece to addressing our current pandemic and for our communities to be able to recover. Public health has been extremely underfunded for years and It’s imperative that the state invest in these much-needed resources now. The lack of funding over decades has created a ripple effect for other related challenges such as homelessness, mental health crisis, etc. We must be prepared and California can’t wait until another public health emergency hits, causing the same or greater devastation to communities.”