

# WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

## SENATOR DR. RICHARD PAN JOINS LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS AND HEALTH EQUITY ADVOCATES TO URGE PUBLICHERO BUDGET INVESTMENTS

Last week, CACantWait Coalition members, local public health officials, and public health workers were joined by Senator Richard Pan in a virtual press conference to highlight the urgent need for Governor Newsom and state lawmakers to dedicate a small fraction of the state's \$97 billion budget surplus to one-time [PublicHERO workforce pipeline investments](#). The public health and health equity advocates urged dedicating \$186.4 million in PublicHERO funds to recruit, retain, educate and train the next generation of public health workers to respond to existing and emerging public health threats in addition to boosting the state's commitment to fund core, state and local public health services with \$300M annually as part of the budget agreement.

CACantWait stressed the urgency to rebuild California's local public health workforce after the pandemic exposed how a decade of disinvestment in local public health departments left them understaffed, under-resourced and underprepared to protect and save lives.

*Latest updates in this issue:*

- PUBLICHERO PRESS CONFERENCE - 1
- INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION -3
- NATIONAL NURSES WEEK -4

### #PublicHERO Initiative



"Beyond the \$300M the Governor is proposing, we need to also help shore up our existing workforce. Well-funded and fully staffed public health departments equipped with necessary viral surveillance and testing tools help us quickly identify emerging health threats, and isolate infectious individuals, helping protect life and treat people resulting in the best possible health outcomes."

**Dr. Richard Pan, California State Senator and Chair of Senate Health Committee**

Historic underfunding coupled with stress, burnout, and harassment during the pandemic has had a significant impact on the public health workforce and is projected to cause additional public health workers to leave their field. According to the [Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey](#) conducted by de Beaumont Foundation and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, of nearly 45,000 state and local public health workers:

- More than half of public health employees report at least one symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Many public health workers, especially executives, report bullying, threats, and harassment; and
- **Nearly 1 in 3 public health employees say they are considering leaving their organization within the next year**

CHEAC Executive Director Michelle Gibbons highlighted these workforce challenges and reinforced how solutions in the PublicHERO initiative build upon the Governor's SMARTER Plan by helping prepare their workforce to lead local response to current and emerging public health threats like monkeypox.

The virtual press conference was attended by media from every major media market across the state, resulting in significant television and radio coverage, including these clips in [Los Angeles](#), [Sacramento](#), and [San Diego](#).

CHEAC thanks panelists Kim Saruwatari, CHEAC President and Riverside County Public Health Director; Dr. Karen Relucio, Health Officers Association of California President and Napa County Public Health Officer; Kristen Hardy, SEIU Local 1021 Medical Records Clerk; and emcee Beth Malinowski, CACantWait coalition member and Legislative Advocate for SEIU California.



# LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS LEAD THE WAY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES



As demonstrated by Sacramento County Public Health Department's [early response](#) to investigate, test, contact trace, and isolate a suspected - and now confirmed - monkeypox infection, California's local public health departments continue disease prevention and response to protect their communities. This work happens behind the scenes 24/7, often coming to light only when public education around threats is required.

In Santa Cruz, the Public Health Department's Communicable Disease Department's [infographic](#) outlines the lifecycle of the local investigation and response when a local public health department is notified of a potential outbreak or infectious disease of public concern.

As the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reports, cases of COVID-19 are [increasing across the state](#), with the statewide positivity rate at 7% as of May 27th. Public health departments continue to lead the local response, including efforts around COVID-19 testing, disease surveillance, and vaccinations targeted toward vulnerable populations as part of health equity initiatives. San Diego County developed a [messaging campaign](#) on long-COVID in an effort to educate the public about COVID-19. The health department in San Mateo County developed [End of Year guidance](#) for schools on how to host safe events. Contra Costa County's Health Services Department [launched a new initiative](#) aimed at eliminating preventable deaths, Alameda County [partnered with a local church](#) for a vaccine clinic, and Solano County [shared information about their vaccine clinics](#).

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is [calling attention](#) to drastic increases in hepatitis as public health budgets have declined, resulting in a 25% decrease in the public health workforce. Local public health departments have the expertise to begin eliminating and preventing the spread of disease, and continue to call for dedicated funding to provide services, increase access, and integrate services into other health settings as part of a three-pronged strategy. For example, Monterey County's Health Department [launched a social media awareness campaign](#) and Ventura County's Public Health Department [released educational materials](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is supporting efforts to address hepatitis, working with health departments across the country to identify children with hepatitis of unknown cause. As of May 25, [38 states and jurisdictions](#) reported at least one person under investigation, including California.

## PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES ARE RECOGNIZED DURING NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Local public health departments recognized nurses throughout the country during National Nurses Week earlier this month. California's public health nurses serve crucial roles as part of the ongoing local COVID-19 responses, leading outbreak and case investigations for a range of settings that provide essential services, including skilled nursing facilities, homeless shelters, and schools.

The Contra Costa County Public Health Department [released a video](#) on social media to thank nurses who care for children in foster care and recognize nurses for providing access to health care and resources to care givers. [Members of the community](#) also took to social media to thank nurses. In Humboldt County, the public health department [produced a video](#) in recognition of nurses' vital role in the communities helping those in need across public health, behavioral health, and hospital systems.

This year the celebration came as we began to see a sharp increase in COVID-19 positive cases and hospitalizations, resulting in some local jurisdictions like Santa Clara County Public Health to issue [new recommendations on mask-wearing](#), and 12 Bay Area Public Health Officers to [remind the public about preventive measures](#).



1127 11th Street, Suite 806  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 327-7540