



For Immediate Release

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Budget Agreement Sets California on New Course for Public Health, Equity

After a Decade of Disinvestment, California will Begin to Rebuild Local Public Health Capacity, Develop Pipeline of Future Public Health Workers to Deliver Health Equity

SACRAMENTO, CA — California Can't Wait (CACantWait), a coalition of public health officials, local leaders, frontline workers, and health equity advocates, celebrated the final budget agreement containing historic new investments for California's battered local public health departments. The final budget agreement maintains the \$300 million ongoing annual funding commitment made as part of last year's final budget deal, with \$200 million earmarked for local public health departments, and invests an additional \$75.6 million in one-time [Public Health Equity Readiness and Opportunity \(PublicHERO\) Initiative](#) workforce development programs to develop the next generation of public health workers needed to keep California's promise of health equity.

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

"Governor Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers responded to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, dedicating historic new funding levels to reverse the past decade of disinvestment in our core public health services that left vulnerable communities exposed.

"California now leads the nation with an additional \$300 million annual funding commitment to begin to rebuild and sustain the state and local public health infrastructure that we all depend on to keep diseases at bay and each other safe in our daily lives. The additional \$75.6 million in one-time PublicHERO workforce development funding will help local public health departments develop the future public health lab directors, epidemiologists, microbiologists, public health

nurses, and public health professionals needed to address the social determinants of health that give way for poor health outcomes to persist and deliver on the promise of health equity.”

Alicia Perez, Patient Access Rep, Golden Valley Health Center, member SEIU 521

“Public health workers have always been essential, but COVID-19 demonstrated we do more than save lives, we also have an essential role in eliminating health disparities. Today’s budget agreement begins to rebuild our local and state public health infrastructure with \$300 million in ongoing annual funding. It also provides a one-time investment of \$75.6 million to educate and train the diverse workforce California needs to deliver health equity.”

Kat DeBurgh, Executive Director, Health Officers Association of California

“This budget agreement has been years in the making. We have long known that public health workers keep our communities safe, and we are thrilled that both the governor and the legislature have recognized the importance of public health infrastructure in California.”

Coalition members said they will continue to push for an additional \$120 million proposed in their PublicHERO initiative for workforce recruitment and retention stipends that were not included in the final budget agreement.

“In the face of the great resignation, with public health leaders and professionals at all levels leaving the field after two years of stress, burnout, and harassment during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that more work remains to be done to recruit and retain our public health workforce to respond to growing health inequities perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” added Gibbons. “We look forward to working with our California Can’t Wait partners and public health champions to see that these crucial investments are made.”

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