

WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

ON ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION DAY, CHEAC MEMBERS URGE LEGISLATURE TO REJECT GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED CUTS TO PUBLICHERO WORKFORCE FUNDS

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Dozens of County Health Executives Association of California members from across the state came to the Capitol on February 1st to deliver a clear message: while California's public health emergency will end February 28, the need to invest in our state's local public health workforce is only growing more urgent.

That's why Newsom's January budget proposal to slash \$49.8M in funding for public health workforce development and training programs advocated for as part of last year's Public Health Equity and Readiness Opportunity (PublicHERO) Initiative is so concerning. California must be better prepared for the next public health threat - and that requires building a public health workforce pipeline and training our next generation of public health lab directors and lab staff, epidemiologists, microbiologists, and other public health professionals that we rely on as our frontline of defense against disease and illness.



In meetings with legislators, in communication with the [media](#), and on [social media](#), CHEAC and #CACantWait members are sounding the alarm. Public health experts and public health workers are warning that eliminating #PublicHERO could leave vulnerable Californians exposed to increased rates of diseases and existing and emerging public health threats, exacerbate health disparities that have worsened over the last three years, and jeopardize progress made during the pandemic to prioritize health equity.



We are disappointed that Governor Newsom's budget fails to recognize that California Can't Wait to rebuild our local public health workforce pipeline that responds to existing and emerging public health threats and make progress toward our health equity goals. Unfortunately, this budget repeats the same mistakes of our past: returning to the boom and bust approach of funding our public health workforce is what left California vulnerable to COVID-19 and left crucial work to address social determinants of health undone."



MICHELLE GIBBONS
COUNTY HEALTH EXECUTIVES
ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA



Across California, public health departments have lost untold numbers from their professional workforce due to retirement, burnout, and stress that accelerated throughout three years of ongoing pandemic response. In the years leading up to the pandemic, local public health departments reported shrinking staffing numbers as two decades of disinvestment in the local public health workforce took their toll. While recent investment in Future of Public Health Funding will help establish additional positions in local health departments, we must also invest in public health workforce training and development to build a pipeline into those positions.

Leaders from CHEAC and members of the #CACantWait Coalition are urging the legislature to reject the Governor's proposed cuts and protect these crucial public health workforce investments promised in last year's budget. Two of the critical programs slated to be funded by #PublicHERO are spotlighted below.

Follow #PublicHERO on Twitter to support and amplify our advocacy efforts.

Public Health Lab Aspire:

#PublicHERO targets investments to the [Public Health Lab Aspire](#) program to address the severe shortage of trained and qualified public health laboratory directors, a requirement in order to operate a public health laboratory.

The Lab Aspire Public Health Laboratory Assistant Director Fellowship Program, sponsored by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Office of the State Public Health Laboratory Director (OSPHLD), CDPH Laboratory Field Services (LFS) and the California Association of Public Health Laboratory Directors (CAPHLD), trains and prepares qualified professionals to direct local California Public Health Laboratories.

The Lab Aspire Assistant Director Fellowship is open to postdoctoral level candidates with Public Health Microbiologist (PHM) certification, and California Public Health Laboratory Managers or Supervisors with four or more years of supervisory experience after PHM certification. Assistant Director fellowships are typically two years, but the actual completion time depends on the fellow's experience, background and successful completion of program requirements.

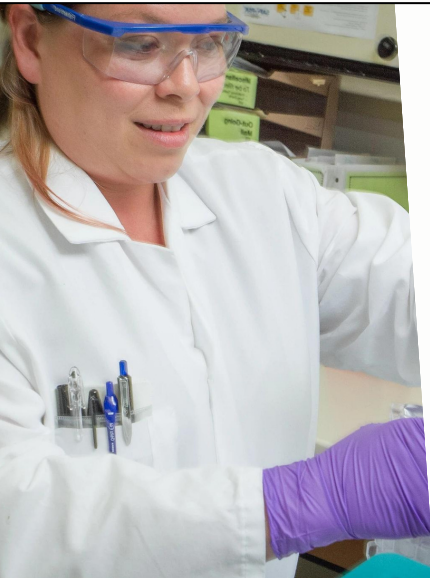
There are five continuing fellows at the following Public Health laboratories: Tulare, Orange, San Francisco, Humboldt, and Santa Clara. Funding the Public Health Lab Aspire program as part of the #PublicHERO budget will ensure that California has the highly skilled and trained public health lab directors to keep our public health laboratories open and responsive to existing and emerging public health threats.

California Microbiologist Training:

The [California Microbiologist Training](#) is funded as part of #PublicHERO to increase the number of Public Health Microbiologist Trainee spots in California, a requirement that must be fulfilled in order to become a California Certified Public Health Microbiologist (PHM).

California Certified PHM's are professional laboratorians who specialize in detecting, isolating, and identifying the microorganisms that are associated with infectious and communicable diseases. In a public health laboratory, PHM's perform analyses on specimens from humans, as well as from water supplies, food and the environment. They provide laboratory support for the surveillance, control and prevention of communicable diseases and other health hazards in the community, ensuring the water we drink and the food we eat is safe and free from disease.

Investing in the California Microbiologist Training program is one of the most effective tools we have to develop the next generation of public health heroes to defend us diseases. PHM program participants say that enrolling in the training program has helped strengthen their interest in the field of public health and foster relationships that will help further their careers:



“ I have lived in Humboldt County since 1999. In 2012 I learned that there was an opportunity to work as a Public Health Microbiologist for the county. I returned to school and finished my degree in Microbiology at Humboldt State University in 2017. The PHM training has already shown me why Public Health is an essential service to communities in the state of California. It has allowed me to make connections with like-minded individuals that I hope to continue collaborating with for the rest of my career. I am excited to have the opportunity to help my community while working in a field that I truly enjoy.”

HEATHER MADDOX

PUBLIC HEALTH MICROBIOLOGIST TRAINEE, CLASS OF 2019, HUMBOLDT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LAB

PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS JOIN ASM. WEBER TO BOOST SUCCESSFUL CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH INITIATIVE, EXPAND HEALTH EQUITY

Earlier this month, Assembly Member Dr. Akilah Weber (D-La Mesa) introduced [AB 1057](#), sponsored by the CHEAC, to boost the reach and impact of [California's Home Visiting Program \(CHVP\)](#). The program empowers families to overcome risks and barriers to positive maternal and child health outcomes by deploying public health professionals to reach pregnant people and new parents in communities with information, resources, and support.

AB 1057 addresses gaps that have become more apparent during the pandemic, especially for underserved communities, and boosts the offerings and reach of home visits. For example, AB 1057 would provide local health departments with the flexibility to embed mental health supports into home visiting to address clients' mental health needs which have increased during the pandemic. The legislation would also promote the use of additional models, providing flexibility to best reach the needs of communities traditionally marginalized with greater access to home visiting.



As a doctor, I know that preventing disease is better than curing it. That's the goal of home visiting - to reach pregnant people and new parents at the earliest opportunity to ensure birth parents and babies have the best chance to be healthy throughout their lives. AB 1057 strengthens California's home visiting program to address social determinants of health, improve infant and child health and development, strengthen family functioning, and cultivate strong communities."

DR. AKILAH WEBER
MEMBER, CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY

"In our home visiting programs we are always looking for ways to best support moms and families, especially in our most remote communities. One of our most successful programs is specifically for first-time mothers. With more flexibility, our public health nurses could support pregnant individuals who have multiple children, which is a current gap in our community." - **Sofia Pereira, Public Health Director, County of Humboldt.**

CHEAC will be launching a robust social media campaign on Twitter to urge legislators to support AB 1057. Stay tuned for more information on how you can support advocacy efforts to enhance the home visiting program!

CHEAC, PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS RECOGNIZE PUBLIC HEALTH HEROES FOR LIFE SAVING PANDEMIC INITIATIVES LEADING UP TO END OF COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY

In October, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the [COVID-19 state of emergency](#) will end on February 28, 2023, marking a historic day after three years of ongoing pandemic emergency response.

Leading up to the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency, local public health departments across California recognized the sacrifices and celebrated the heroic efforts of their local governmental public health workforce. From education and outreach, contact tracing and testing, vaccine administration, and health equity initiatives, local #PublicHealthHeroes worked tirelessly, oftentimes faced with threats, intimidation and harassment, to lead us to the end of the public health emergency. While COVID-19 still poses a threat, particularly in undervaccinated communities, California now has the tools and resources to keep Californians safe from this potentially deadly disease.

CHEAC recognizes our members and their staff for their hard work and dedication to protecting their communities and saving lives during this unprecedented time. Join the Twitter campaign to highlight your local governmental heroes using the hashtag [#PublicHealthHeroes](#).



rivcohealthdirector @rivcohealthdir1 · 3h ...
As CA's official [#Pandemic](#) public health emergency ends tomorrow, we celebrate the [#PublicHealthHeroes](#) who saved countless lives throughout the country, state and locally in [#RiversideCounty](#).



Kern Public Health @KCPublicHealth · 57m ...
As California prepares to end the [#Pandemic](#) public health emergency on Feb 28, we celebrate our local [#PublicHealthHEROES](#) workforce who worked tirelessly to protect and keep communities healthy. Today we highlight Phela Batiste from our Black Infant Health Program!

