



February 27, 2024

The Honorable Akilah Weber, M.D.
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1 on Health
1021 O Street, Suite 4130
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: CDPH Budget: CalCONNECT – REQUEST FOR REAPPROPRIATED FUNDING
Set for Hearing March 4, 2024 – Asm. Budget Subcommittee No. 1**

Dear Assembly Member Weber,

The County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC), representing local health departments throughout the state, writes to request \$33.5 million to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to support the continuation of the California Confidential Network for Contact Tracing (CalCONNECT) system. We recognize the current budget climate and recommend reallocating unexpended state operations funds provided to CDPH in prior years, in addition to exploring the use of existing federal funding, to maintain this system.

CalCONNECT is California's information technology system for communicable disease case and outbreak investigation, contact tracing, symptom monitoring of exposed individuals, and communication with affected persons, including the dissemination of isolation and quarantine guidance for cases and contacts. The CalCONNECT system was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic and has equipped state and local disease investigators with modernized capabilities to identify cases and exposed contacts and take appropriate actions to further mitigate the spread of infectious disease.

Prior to the CalCONNECT system being established, local health departments were limited to labor intensive and manual processes for disease investigation and contact tracing, including but not limited to the use of handwritten documentation, computerized spreadsheets, and individual communication outreach attempts. These processes, especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, were time-intensive, did not allow for notifications and reporting across local health jurisdiction boundaries, and required considerable staff resources.

Importantly, since its creation, CalCONNECT has been expanded and enhanced to support additional communicable diseases, including mpox, avian influenza, measles, Ebola, Marburg Virus, and other pathogens. According to CDPH, CalCONNECT by June 30, 2024, will additionally support case investigation and contact tracing activities for sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

CalCONNECT, currently utilized by 55 local health departments statewide, has been a critical tool

that has aided state and local health departments to identify cases and contacts, share case information between local health jurisdictions, communicate vital public health guidance and information, and protect the health and safety of California communities.

The Governor's January budget proposal did not include funding for ongoing maintenance and operations of this important system past June 30, 2024, which is approximately \$33.5 million. Without dedicated funding, CalCONNECT is at risk of ceasing operations, leaving local health departments throughout the state to return to outdated and cumbersome disease investigation and contact tracing processes.

CHEAC respectfully urges the Legislature to reappropriate unexpended state operations funds previously provided to CDPH for information technology systems and projects from the 2022 and 2023 Budget Acts to support the continued operation of the CalCONNECT system.

Should you have any questions, please contact Michelle Gibbons at mgibbons@cheac.org. Thank you.

Respectfully,

As signed by

Michelle Gibbons
Executive Director
County Health Executives Association of California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Andrea Margolis, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
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