



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Senate and Assembly Joint Budget Heeds Lessons Learned from Pandemic: Disinvestment in Public Health is a Costly and Deadly Mistake**

### ***Proposal Rejects May Revise Cuts of \$300M Annually to Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce***

SACRAMENTO, CA — California Can't Wait, a coalition of public health officials, local leaders, frontline workers, and health equity advocates applauded the Senate and Assembly Joint Budget proposal for FY 24-25, which keeps California's promise of \$300M in annual Future of Public Health (FoPH) investment to rebuild our state and local public health workforce and infrastructure.

"Local public health leaders thank Senate and Assembly Budget Committee and Subcommittee chairs and leadership for recognizing that California can't go back on its commitment to rebuild our state and local public health workforce and infrastructure," said **Michelle Gibbons, Executive Director of the County Health Executives Association of California**. "The Senate and Assembly Joint Budget proposal protects the progress we've made over the past two years to be ready for the next public health threat - whether it's a virus, natural disaster, or bioterrorism. To date, local public health jurisdictions have deployed these funds to hire more than 1,100 local public health heroes, including public health nurses, disease investigators, epidemiologists, microbiologists, health equity coordinators, and other public health professionals. As we learned in COVID-19, being ready to detect and prevent the spread of disease is vital to keep our communities healthy, keep our schools open, and our economy thriving."

Today's news comes on the heels of a recent California Can't Wait Coalition [press conference](#) (Passcode: &Lr9rky2) days after Governor Gavin Newsom released his "May Revision" budget, which proposed to slash \$300 million in ongoing FoPH funding that only recently started to flow to local health departments.

Over the past year, FoPH investments have allowed local health departments to hire more than 1,100 public health professionals. FoPH provides investments in core public health services that are crucial to protecting the health and well-being of local communities and defending against threats of disease, including the potential threat of [avian flu](#) and rising rates of [measles](#), [tuberculosis](#), and [congenital syphilis](#), as well as to contain any new threats.

"We must never forget the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic: disinvestment in public health costs lives. We look forward to continuing to work with Senate and Assembly leadership and the Governor's administration to ensure that California doesn't repeat the same deadly mistakes of the past." **Gibbons** continued.

SEIU California applauded the Legislature's budget approach which maintains life-saving progress on rebuilding the state's public health workforce.

"California learned the hard way that neglecting public health costs lives. The day COVID-19 came to California, public health departments were woefully understaffed and ill-equipped, lacking even basic protective equipment such as N-95s. Some departments even used fax machines for disease tracking. We did not have the tools or staff we needed to protect the public or ourselves," **Ileana M. Meza Ward, DNP, RN, WHNP-BC, Emergency Public Health Nurse with the LA County Department of Public Health and a member of SEIU** told news reporters in Mid-May.

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