



For Immediate Release

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What They're Saying: Public Health Leaders, Community Organizations, Frontline Workers Respond to Senate and Assembly Joint Budget Proposal

SACRAMENTO, CA — After the Senate and Assembly released their Joint Budget for FY 24-25, members of the California Can't Wait Coalition hailed the proposal to maintain \$300 million annually in Future of Public Health (FoPH) investments. Governor Newsom's May Revision budget had proposed to slash the funds dedicated to rebuilding public health workforce and infrastructure, funds that have already been deployed to hire 1,100 local public health heroes. 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.

Michelle Gibbons, Executive Director, 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."

Ileana M. Meza Ward, DNP, RN, WHNP-BC, Emergency Preparedness Public Health Nurse with the LA County Department of Public Health and a member of SEIU

“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.”

Kat DeBurgh, Executive Director of the Health Officers Association of California

“We owe it to those who suffered and died during the pandemic to make sure that we are never caught unprepared again. This funding will make sure we have a workforce ready to respond to the public health threats of today and tomorrow.”

Harold Goldstein, Executive Director of Public Health Advocates

“California’s public health investments, including the hiring of 1,100 local public health professionals, support vital functions like epidemiology, food safety, addressing social determinants of health and so much more. We must not forget lessons we learned from COVID-19, especially as we face the risk of more frequent climate disasters and communicable diseases. Maintain these investments so that we can keep our students learning in schools, our businesses growing, and our communities thriving.”

Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

“Disinvestment in public health departments has far-reaching and devastating impacts, particularly on Black and Latinx communities. When funding is cut, the ability of public health workers to respond to urgent public health threats and address inequities in these communities is severely hampered. We have seen firsthand how an underfunded public health system leads to poorer health outcomes and increased vulnerabilities, making it crucial that we maintain robust funding to ensure equitable access to health services and protect the most vulnerable among us. I want to thank the Legislature and coalition partners for their unwavering support and commitment to public health. By keeping this investment, we can take a significant step toward a healthier and more equitable future for Los Angeles County residents and for all Californians.”

Ronald Coleman Baeza, Managing Director of Policy, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)

“Communities of color disproportionately suffered as a result of illness and death during the pandemic when public health departments were not adequately or appropriately funded by the state. The Future of Public Health Funding must remain in place to ensure public health departments can continue building strong relationships with community members to continue our collective work to reduce long standing disparities.”

Sebastian Perez, Policy Committee Co-Chair of the End the Epidemics Coalition

"The End the Epidemics coalition applauds the legislature for rejecting the Governor's proposal to eviscerate our state's public health system. As a coalition that focuses on the syndemic of HIV, STIs, viral hepatitis, and drug overdose through harm reduction, our organizations depend on the flexibility of state funds to curb the spread of intersecting epidemics. Protecting the programs that our public health workforce is uniquely equipped to provide is essential to ending the HIV epidemic in our lifetime, lowering the rates of infection in our state's out-of-control STI crisis, bringing attention and care to chronically under-resourced HCV and HCB services, and saving lives from drug overdose that the Governor says he is committed to."

Melissa Stafford Jones, President and CEO, Public Health Institute

"Thank you to the California Legislature for recognizing that we cannot address critical existing and emerging public health issues without investing in strong public health systems. We urge Governor Newsom to support these proposals as California's final budget is decided in the coming days."

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