

#CACantWait

UNTIL THE NEXT CRISIS

May 14, 2024

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services
1021 O Street, Room 6720
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

RE: Governor's Proposal to Eliminate \$300 Million Future of Public Health (FoPH) – REJECT

Dear Senators Wiener and Menjivar and Assembly Members Gabriel and Weber,

The undersigned organizations, representing the California Can't Wait Coalition, strongly oppose the Governor's May Revision budget proposal to eliminate the \$300 million ongoing General Fund Future of Public Health investment, with \$200 million dedicated to local health department workforce and infrastructure and \$100 million dedicated to state public health department. We additionally oppose the Administration's proposal to eliminate \$52.5 million in Future of Public Health funds in the current fiscal year.

We must acknowledge the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, especially that local health departments are instrumental in protecting lives, ensuring health equity, and avoiding excess social and economic disruption. Our local health departments are the first line of defense against all public health threats and rely on a highly skilled and specialized workforce.

Even before the pandemic, public health departments faced significant workforce challenges.

Fewer than one in six graduates from schools of public health go on to work in governmental public health and nationwide, public health lost roughly 50,000 jobs after the Great Recession. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges as public health workers have grappled with burnout and harassment, while also being heavily recruited by other sectors.

Through the 2022 Budget Act, California took a transformational step toward improving our state and local public health departments by investing \$300 million ongoing General Fund in public health workforce and infrastructure. \$200 million of this investment is dedicated to local health departments, resulting in the creation of nearly 1,200 new staff positions statewide. At least 70 percent of allocations to jurisdictions must be used to support the expansion of permanent public health staff positions.

Local health departments have hired staff in areas including but not limited to chronic diseases and community health, infectious disease prevention and control, communications, emergency preparedness and response, family health, public health laboratories, and environmental health. Local health departments have hired staff based on community health needs identified through community health assessments, community health improvement plans, or department strategic plans.

Since the enactment of this investment, local health departments have made significant progress in hiring staff positions to strengthen public health capacities and capabilities. FoPH funds support the following number of staff positions by region, of which over 900 have been filled:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Positions Created</u>
Central California	210
Bay Area	212
Greater Sacramento-Sierra	137
Los Angeles	215
Rural North	67
Southern California	411
Statewide	1,253

Eliminating this funding would have serious and detrimental impacts to local health department services and operations, as well as public health professionals who have recently been hired to protect the health and safety of residents of our communities. Importantly, public health is uniquely distinct from the health care delivery system, and the health care delivery system is unlikely to be able to step into the void left by the loss of this critical public health infrastructure.

Our nation has experienced what understaffed and under-resourced local public health departments mean for community disease spread and outcomes during a pandemic, and California is no exception. California must not turn its back on our vital public health workforce as we continue to respond to existing and emerging public health threats.

It is for these reasons that our organizations respectfully urge the Legislature to reject the

Governor's May Revision proposals and maintain funding Future of Public Health investments.

Respectfully,

As signed by

Michelle Gibbons
Executive Director
County Health Executives Association of
California

As signed by

Kat DeBurgh
Executive Director
Health Officers Association of California

As signed by

Beth Malinowski
Government Relations Advocate
SEIU California

As signed by

Jolie Onodera
Senior Legislative Advocate
California State Association of Counties

As signed by

Sarah Dukett
Policy Advocate
Rural County Representatives of California

As signed by

Kelly Brooks-Lindsey
Legislative Advocate
Urban Counties of California

As signed by

Harold Goldstein, DrPH
Executive Director
Public Health Advocates

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Marjorie Swartz, Policy Consultant, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Rosielyn Pulmano, Policy Consultant, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Elisa Wynne, Staff Director, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
Scott Ogus, Deputy Staff Director, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Kirk Feely, Fiscal Director, Senate Republican Caucus
Anthony Archie, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Joe Shinstock, Fiscal Director, Assembly Republican Caucus
Eric Dietz, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus

California Can't Wait Coalition – REJECT Elimination of Future of Public Health
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Joe Stephenshaw, Director, California Department of Finance

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency

Dr. Tomás Aragón, Director and State Public Health Officer, California Dept. of Public Health

Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Angela Pontes, Chief Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Will Owens, Fiscal & Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office