

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

March 4, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan, MD
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula, MD
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Governor Newsom’s January 2019 Proposal to Reduce Health Realignment Funding AB85 from 60/40 to 75/25

Dear Senator Pan and Assemblymember Arambula:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to respectfully express our opposition of the January’s budget proposal to change the health realignment funding formula in AB 85 from 60/40 to 75/25. The County of Santa Barbara, along with five other counties are facing severe public health impacts, should the Governor’s proposal relative to the AB 85 cost-share agreement between counties and the State be modified to fund other elements of the proposed state budget. Based on our analysis of the funding and rationale, we ardently dispute the methodology and rationale behind this funding change.

While we recognize the merits of ensuring access to healthcare, part of the funding mechanism is based on an inaccurate financial premise and will have dire consequences on the essential core public health services provided by Santa Barbara County, Stanislaus County, Yolo County, Sacramento County, and Placer County Public Health Departments. The Governor’s proposed budget inaccurately assumes that county costs will decrease because of this proposed Medi-Cal expansion to cover more indigents. In actuality, any savings would be nominal and in no way offset the redirection of realignment as proposed.

Specific consequences to public health programs if this change is implemented include:

- ✓ A 50% cut of realignment support to communicable disease control and epidemiology that would result in severely limiting County ability to conduct day-to-day communicable disease surveillance and response and cripple our ability to identify and respond to outbreaks and disasters. Communicable disease programs have never been more critical. Santa Barbara County is experiencing an alarming growth rate in tuberculosis cases, including several with multi-drug resistance along with demonstrated increases in sexually transmitted infections, seeing upsurges in numbers of syphilis and HIV. Stanislaus County is also seeing rising rates of syphilis and ranks 3rd in California for high rates of babies born infected. In Yolo County, sexually transmitted infections have skyrocketed, and 1 in 7 pregnant mothers are being hospitalized for depression. Suicide and drug overdose deaths have more than doubled. Additional redirect of 1991 Health Realignment funding to the county would result in fewer public health resources and would hamper efforts at this crucial time when prevention and treatment are critically important. Discontinuing or interrupting public health clinical services would result in increased spread of syphilis, tuberculosis transmission and a decrease in prevention.
- ✓ Vaccination services would also be reduced and significant reductions to programs that serve new mothers, children, and other vulnerable and special populations will occur. Maternal Child and adolescent health will be severely impacted. Programs like Women Infants and Children (WIC), and disability prevention are all funded by realignment dollars. This critical funding supports our Public Health infrastructure, making it possible to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. With the rise of homeless encampments, three immunization clinics in the last four months in Stanislaus County have been conducted to prevent the spread of disease, all supported with realignment funding. Reductions to services would have to be made. A rise in communicable disease, a decline in immunization rates, and an inadequate public health response to emerging community needs would be anticipated. The infrastructure reductions that would result from the funding loss, would also dramatically reduce the critical workforce capacity needed to respond locally or with mutual aid to other jurisdictions when disasters occur such as wildfires and floods.
- ✓ This loss of core public health funding will limit our response to initiate contact investigations, surveillance, and other public health nursing interventions. Public Health Laboratory testing and analysis work, also made possible through realignment funding, is necessary to support all disease control and environmental health activities in our county Public Health Departments. The Public Health Laboratory supports epidemiologic investigations and programs to prevent and control infectious disease of humans and animals as well as pollution of air, water, and food. Consistent with the alarming increases in communicable diseases, there is an equal demand in priority laboratory testing to initiate important public health and safety measures.
- ✓ This proposed reduction in funding will limit the ability of Public Health Departments to assist county residents and address important issues and initiatives such as outreach programs to promote healthy lifestyles that result in cost savings to the medical system. Other reductions to child health programs, tobacco prevention programs, child lead

poisoning prevention, oral health and refugee health programs would also go unfunded or be severely restricted with the proposed realignment change.

We ask that the budget subcommittee reconsider this proposal. There is no demonstrable nexus between expanding health care to this segment of the population and a lessening need for the public health programs that would be robbed of needed funding in order to pay for that expansion. We would urge the Administration and budget leaders to look to other, more appropriate and more directly -relieved programs to resource the funds necessary to pay for this recommended expansion.

If you have questions about the Board's position, please contact the County's Legislative Coordinator, Dennis Bozanich at 805-568-3403 or dbozanich@countyofsb.org.

Sincerely,



Cliff Berg
Governmental Advocates, Inc.

cc: Diane Cummins, Special Assistant to the Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health and Human Services
Renita Polk, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health and Human Services
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services
Nicole Vazquez, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health and Human Services
The Honorable Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, 13th Senate District
The Honorable Assemblymember Monique Limon, 37th Assembly District
The Honorable Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
Members, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Dennis Bozanich, Legislative Coordinator, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors