
Public Health Advisory Board

July 30, 2020

The Honorable Phil Serna, Chair
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
700 H Street, Suite 1450
Sacramento, CA 95814

Navdeep Gill
Chief Executive Officer
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Room 7650
Sacramento, CA 95814

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, our attention has been focused on our County's response to this crisis. Dr. Beilenson, Dr. Kasirye, and the staff of multiple departments have worked tirelessly to mitigate the effects of this disease.

It is important, however, that we not lose sight of other infection emergencies around us. By way of this letter, the **Public Health Advisory Board** urges that you direct your attention to another infection control crisis, that of sexually-transmitted infections and HIV.

In 2018, chlamydia infections in Sacramento County exceeded the State average by 30%, that same year gonorrhea infections exceeded the State average by 25%. Over the last few years, we have had an alarming resurgence of syphilis and congenital syphilis, a devastating complication. There has also been a steady increase in cases of HIV. Last year, Sacramento County was designated as one of eight Tier 1 counties by the State Office of AIDS due to the local HIV burden.

Year after year Sacramento County is identified as one of the WORST counties in California when it comes to STD and HIV prevalence. This is a dubious honor.

In response, Sacramento County's Sexual Health Promotion Unit wrote numerous grant proposals to obtain new funding to address this crisis. Fortunately, their efforts were successful. From the Federal and State governments, and a local foundation, the County has already been granted \$1,700,893, with another \$1,037,593 soon available. Some of these are multi-year grants, representing a minimum of \$10,578,965 over the next 5 years. These grants address STD/HIV/and hepatitis C virus prevention, testing, linkage to care, and the development of a Ryan White medical clinic.

These grants provide funding for the hiring of multiple skilled personnel: nurses, community health workers, health educators, medical assistants, communicable

disease investigators, and even a microbiologist. For an understaffed division, struggling with one of the worst outbreaks in the State, these positions will provide a lifeline.

The recent administrative decision to restrict requests for new positions until October, even when these positions are supported by grant funding, jeopardizes that funding and unnecessarily denies services to at-risk populations. Because of the inability of our single Ryan White care provider to adequately serve 2600 Ryan White ambulatory care patients, hundreds of HIV positive clients have already fallen out of HIV medical care, with the potential for devastating outcomes. This situation should not continue.

It is our hope that you will allow the Department of Health Services to immediately utilize grant funds to hire personnel so that the Department may implement the STD and HIV prevention and treatment programs supported by these grants.

Thank you,

Farla Kaufman, Chair,
Public Health Advisory Board