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MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION



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August 11, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Room 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, California Medical Association, SEIU California State Council, and California Teachers Association, on behalf of thousands of health care providers and frontline workers, and hundreds of thousands of educators and other essential workers, represented by our organizations, respectfully and urgently request that your administration immediately work with the Legislature to address California's public health, public education, and worker safety crises due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As you acknowledge during your briefings on the State's response to COVID-19, the virus is not yet under control within our communities and workplaces. We cannot keep pretending the issue will resolve itself in the near term, nor can we continue having a conversation about reopening the state's economy or schools without first addressing the basic public health and safety needs that are essential for doing so. **The simple fact is, if we want our economy to reopen and have our children back to school, we must focus on public health, effective testing and tracing to slow the spread of COVID-19, and the basic needs in providing care, keeping workers safe, and opening schools.**

California is facing multiple, overlapping crises that require both an immediate and a longer-term investment of state resources. We are calling on you and your administration to find state-driven solutions in addressing these crises:

- **We have a public health and safety crisis:** We lack adequate PPE, testing, and public health infrastructure to suppress the virus successfully and safely, while equitably reopening our society. While testing sites statewide are currently conducting an average of 120,000 tests per day, this is still not enough testing capacity to mitigate or suppress COVID-19 cases in all counties. According to the Harvard Global Health Initiative, California is testing approximately 319 people per 100k population, but the recommend target for suppression is 2,088 per 100k population. It is important that as testing capacity is increased, with a priority for locations within vulnerable communities, the average testing processing time is also brought down and contact tracing efforts are expanded. To prevent further compounding issues, the state must also consider the upcoming flu season and the additional strain it will place upon the health care system.
- **We have an education crisis:** One in five children still don't have access to distance learning, and far more lack the additional support they need to succeed as we move toward safely reopening schools, which may be months away. Furthermore, schools lack the resources to successfully carry out such a reopening in terms of space, staff time, PPE, testing, and many other basic requirements for safety. States that have tried to reopen schools quickly have seen skyrocketing cases and immediate reclosures. And now, with the cases of children who have been infected with COVID-19 in childcare right here in California, and in Texas, as well as the students in Georgia, we can no longer say children are not transmitters of the virus.

- **We have a worker safety crisis:** Health care workers, teachers, and all essential workers still lack the protective equipment, space, cleaning, and enforcement they need to work safely. Workers continue to lack access to sufficient sick days, quarantine days, and health care.

Furthermore, within all these overlapping crises, we have an equity crisis. Those that are low-income, Black and brown workers, and students, are overwhelmingly more likely to suffer because of discrimination, structural inequities, and the subsequent higher risks imposed upon them. This is amplified in every aspect of our current situation – such as lack of access to education, the harmful impact on small businesses, and, most importantly, increased exposure, disease, and death.

Solutions to these crises must address the needs of all frontline health care workers and providers, as well as educators and other essential workers, so we are not pitted against each other. **We should not be forced to compete for vital supplies and resources that are necessary for us all to do our jobs, and ultimately fully reopen our state.**

We cannot look to physicians, nurses, educators, and others to solve these crises on top of doing their jobs in the middle of this pandemic. It is the State’s job to ensure essential workers, patients and students have what they need to provide these essential services to all Californians.

We, of course, recognize that this immediate surge of resources will result in a significant short-term expenditure by the state, but it is a needed short-term investment to help California safely reopen its economy— resulting in long-term benefits. We then must discuss long-term funding solutions to create stable and equitable health care and education systems.

We must accept the fact this is a long-term problem that necessitates a long-term plan to address it, starting with the urgent needs on the front lines of health care, education, and worker safety.

We must come together for a comprehensive and equitable plan that invests additional resources into our public health, educational, and employment systems. The health care sector, education stakeholders, and workers’ representatives and employers are ready to work together, alongside state leadership, for the greater good, focusing all our resources first and foremost on getting the pandemic under control.

We cannot waste this final month of the legislative session, and we believe it is crucial to continue our work together in a special session if needed. We want to partner with you on this immediately and look forward to continuing this urgent conversation.

Sincerely,



Jodi Hicks
President and CEO
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California



Dustin Corcoran
Chief Executive Officer
California Medical Association



Alma Hernández
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E. Toby Boyd
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