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July 13, 2017

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Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
P.O. Box 997377, MS 0500
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Re: AB 186 (Eggman): Controlled Substances: Safer Drug Consumption Program (Support)

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Board Meeting on July 6, 2017 to take a Support recommendation on AB 186 (Eggman), a bill that would establish a pilot program that would enable eight counties to establish and operate a safer drug consumption program, such as a Supervised Injection Facility (SIF), for persons 18 years of age or older. Safer drug consumption program requirements include a space supervised by healthcare professionals or other trained staff where people who use drugs can consume pre-obtained drugs, sterile consumption supplies, and access to referrals to addiction treatment. AB 186 would also exempt a person from existing criminal sanctions while he or she is using or operating such a program.

CCLHO supports AB 186 as it enables but does not require pilot projects with the goal of harm reduction. The opioid epidemic in the United States is ongoing and drug overdose deaths continue to climb. Moreover, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others have recognized the rising rates of certain diseases associated with the injection of drugs; reported Hepatitis C infections from 2011 to 2015 rose most rapidly in the 20-29 year old age group in California.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/ha0013.aspx>

SIFs are designed to reduce the health and societal problems associated with injection drug use. These programs provide sterile injection equipment, information about reducing the harms of drugs, health care, treatment referrals, and access to medical staff. Some offer counseling, hygienic amenities, and other services, and are also successful in reducing public disorder associated with illicit drug use, including improper syringe disposal and public drug use. SIFs have been researched and evaluated for years. The Drug Policy Alliance points out research evidence from other countries that SIFs reduce HIV and hepatitis transmission risks, prevent overdose deaths, reduce public injections, reduce discarded syringes, and increase the number of people who enter drug treatment.

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/resource/supervised-consumption-services>

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As you know, CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now the California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, and commissions, as well as officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

This position of support for AB 186 is consistent with CCLHO's legislative priority of providing recommendations on population-based issues affecting the health of specific, vulnerable populations. AB 823 also aligns with CCLHO's strategic priority of providing advice and scientific expertise on public health matters.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Ken.Cutler@co.nevada.ca.us or at 530-265-7154.

Sincerely and on behalf of the CCLHO membership,

Original signed by Dr. Ken Cutler

Ken Cutler, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers