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June 13, 2016

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Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH, Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
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RE: SB 1380 (Mitchell): Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (Support)

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Board meeting on June 2, 2016 to take a Support recommendation on SB 1380 (Mitchell), a bill that would require the inclusion of Housing First Policies in state programs that provide housing or housing-related services to those experiencing or at risk for homelessness. SB 1380 would also establish the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council to oversee the implementation of Housing First guidelines, along with other specified duties.

Housing First is an evidence-based model to reduce homelessness that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for those experiencing homelessness, along with supportive services and connections to community-based supports. Homelessness is an issue with significant public health implications, as persistent homelessness impedes access to needed health and employment services. The chronically homeless often cycle through costly emergency-driven public systems – emergency shelters, emergency rooms, detoxification centers, criminal justice facilities – without getting the ongoing care they need to address severe mental illness, substance abuse disorders, or chronic health conditions. The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, with the emphasis on Housing First, will help address the physical and mental health needs of those most in need.

As you are aware, 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.

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The CCLHO position of support for the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council is consistent with its strategic priority to promote and protect health and well-being through a focus on targeted outcomes for all people. Furthermore, SB 1380 fulfills the CCLHO legislative priority of addressing a population-based issue affecting the health of specific vulnerable populations.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 510-981-5301 or at jberreman@ci.berkeley.ca.us or. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Dr. Janet Berreman

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers