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May 14, 2019

Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
1615 Capitol Avenue
PO Box 997377, MS 0500
Sacramento, California 95899-7377

Re: SB 160 (Jackson): Emergency services: cultural competence

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Board meeting on April 4, 2019 to take a Support recommendation on SB 160 (Jackson), a bill that would require a county to integrate cultural competence, as defined, into its emergency plan, upon the next update to its emergency plan, as specified. The bill would also require a county to provide a forum for community engagement in geographically diverse locations in order to engage with culturally diverse communities, as defined, within its jurisdiction. By increasing the duties of local officials, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Recent large scale emergency responses in California have revealed gaps in cultural and linguistic competence to serve diverse communities, leaving already vulnerable populations more vulnerable in disaster settings. This law would require counties to integrate cultural competence into emergency plans by addressing, at a minimum, how all cultural populations within the jurisdiction are served by the following: emergency communications, including the integration of interpreters and translators; emergency evacuation and sheltering; emergency mitigation and prevention; emergency planning, incorporating qualified representatives from diverse population groups in the community in the planning process; and emergency preparedness, including the use of culturally appropriate resources and outreach techniques to educate and prepare community members for emergencies or disasters. For these reasons, CCLHO recommends Support for SB 160.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and 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.

Should you have any questions, please contact me by email at roldham@placer.ca.gov or by phone at (530) 745-3121. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Oldham, MD, MSHA
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers