

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

June 27, 2023

AND LINDSEY HORVATH

Protecting Funding for Critical Public Health Infrastructure

In 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded 59 jurisdictions, including Los Angeles County, with critical funding to bolster support for and enhance the disease intervention specialist (DIS) workforce. This five-year grant, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, provides Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) with necessary funding to expand the capacity of this essential public health infrastructure.

The DIS workforce supported by this grant has been instrumental in the County’s efforts to control the spread of multiple infectious disease epidemics and outbreaks, including COVID-19, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis, HIV, Hepatitis, and mpox, among others. This funding has allowed Public Health to increase its capacity to conduct prompt disease investigation and contact tracing, ensure client linkage to prevention, treatment, and case management resources, and notify close contacts of potential exposure, a critical tenet in disease prevention efforts. This funding has also

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helped Public Health increase training and technical assistance opportunities to ensure that the current and expanded workforce has the necessary skills to address an increasingly complex set of factors and conditions that contribute to the spread of infections, including substance use disorder, mental illness, homelessness, trauma, and limited access to health care delivery systems. These funds have allowed the County's DIS workforce to also develop skills tied to motivational interviewing and delivering services through a trauma-informed lens. In the end, this investment has been essential to advancing our efforts to save lives and improve health outcomes. The expansion of DIS infrastructure also enhances our capacity and readiness to respond to other emerging diseases, future outbreaks, and other public health emergencies

The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 suspended the federal debt limit through January 1, 2025, includes rescissions of unobligated funds from a variety of federal agencies, including \$13.4 billion from the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC has recently announced that the final two years of grant funding under the DIS five-year grant will be rescinded under this legislation. CDC initially committed funding to grantees for five years and the County is currently in Year 3, which ends in December 2023. Public Health receives \$6,598,516 per year for the grant, which provides support for 34 public health investigators, supervisors, and other staff, among other services. Unless funding can be identified, LA County will lose over \$13 million in funding previously allocated for the remaining two years of the 5-year grant.

As multiple infectious disease threats persist and become increasingly intertwined, including ongoing COVID-19 transmission, persistent new HIV, Hepatitis and TB infections, and a severe and growing STD crisis, it is of paramount importance

that Public Health maintain stable funding for this essential public health infrastructure that includes the use of surveillance and epidemiology to target highly impacted geographic areas, detection of potential clusters, access and referral to diagnosis and treatment resources, and prompt notification of partners and close contacts of potential exposure to a pathogen.

I, **WE**, **THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to: 1) send a five-signature letter to HHS Secretary Becerra with copy to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation advocating for sustained funding for crosscutting infectious disease prevention efforts; and 2) work with Public Health and partners on other advocacy efforts to secure ongoing resources to support critical public health infrastructure.

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