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February 10, 2025

The Honorable Mia Bonta
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health
1020 N Street, LOB Suite 390
Sacramento, CA 94249-0018

RE: HOAC Cosponsors AB 309

Dear Chair Bonta,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California’s sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, is proud to cosponsor AB 309, which seeks to make permanent the provisions allowing pharmacists to furnish sterile syringes to adults without a prescription. This measure is a critical component of California’s comprehensive public health strategy to prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases of public health concern.

The sharing of used syringes remains a leading cause of hepatitis B and hepatitis C transmission and a significant contributor to new HIV infections. These diseases impose substantial physical, emotional, and financial burdens on individuals and communities, and their prevention is a shared public health priority. Evidence-based interventions, such as syringe access, have proven to be effective in reducing transmission rates without increasing drug use, crime, or syringe litter.

Studies from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirm that allowing the purchase of sterile syringes without a prescription reduces syringe sharing and the spread of diseases. Furthermore, this approach generates cost savings for the state by averting the high costs of treating these diseases, including advanced liver disease and other complications.

AB 309 will ensure continued access to sterile syringes through pharmacists, a trusted and accessible source for many Californians. By removing the sunset on provisions established in 2020, this bill will safeguard the health of vulnerable populations and reinforce California’s commitment to evidence-based public health measures.

We urge your “aye” vote on this critical measure.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director
Health Officers Association of California