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February 21, 2025

Senator Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair  
Senate Budget Sub 3  
1020 N Street, Room 502  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Dawn Addis, Chair  
Assembly Budget Sub 1  
1021 O Street, Suite 4120  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Opposition to Proposed Budget Cuts to COPHRI**

Dear Committee Chairs,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers of California’s sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, writes today to express its firm opposition to the proposed 8.4-million-dollar budget cut to the California Overdose Prevention and Harm Reduction Initiative (COPHRI).

This cut would represent 40% of the COPHRI’s operating budget, from Opioid Settlement funds that were specifically allocated to COPHRI by the legislature in 2023. Such a drastic reduction will threaten the important work performed by 55 Syringe Service Program (SSP) grantees statewide to reduce the spread of blood borne disease and prevent overdoses.

The Governor proposes to allocate these funds to the Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) through the Department of Health Care Services. However, funding this already well-funded program from SSP funds will dampen the reach of this life-saving medication. Despite receiving only 8% of the overdose reversal kits distributed by NDP, SSPs and other harm reduction programs have accounted for 58% of documented overdose reversals using those kits. This is because harm reduction programs are responsible for not only distributing these kits, but also for training an extensive network of volunteers, high risk drug users, and their families to use this medication to reverse overdose events.

While Naloxone kits represent late-stage interventions to prevent death by overdose, syringe exchange represents an early-stage intervention that can prevent disease before it occurs. Privileging the late-stage intervention over the early-stage intervention does nothing to prevent the spread of disease. Moreover, SSPs remain a bridge to other services including drug treatment, which also reduces drug related mortality.

For these reasons, HOAC opposes the proposed budget cut and urges the legislature to fully fund COPHRI. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH  
Executive Director  
Health Officers Association of California