



February 19, 2020

The Honorable Philip Y. Ting
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0019

RE: **HOAC Cosponsors Assembly Bill 2077**

Dear Assemblymember Ting,

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 be a cosponsor of your AB 2077, related to access to syringes.

AB 2077 allows continued access to a proven public health disease prevention tool: pharmacy sale of syringes. This bill will protect public health without sacrificing public safety. In 2018, the National Institutes of Health called hepatitis C "among the leading causes of death in the United States"; though recent advances have made hepatitis C far more treatable than in the past, full courses of treatment can cost between \$30,000 and \$95,000. The California Department of Health Office of Viral Hepatitis says that the best way to prevent hepatitis C is to use new, sterile syringes and equipment with every injection.

Similarly, the NIH estimated in 2016 that the average lifetime cost for persons who become infected with HIV at age 35 to be \$326,500. In its "Laying a Foundation for Getting to Zero" plan, the CDPH Office of AIDS has said lack of access to new, sterile injection equipment is one of the primary risk factors that leads to syringe sharing, which puts people who inject drugs at high risk for HIV.

Each of these illnesses can be prevented through public health interventions such as those authorized in AB 2077. Providing discretion to pharmacists to sell syringes to adults without a prescription is an extremely effective public health tool that increases the health and safety of individuals and communities, as well as reduces the cost of treatment of diseases like hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, this scientific and medically-backed approach—endorsed by the American Medical Association, Institute of Medicine, American Pharmacist Association, and the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors—comes at no cost to the state.

It is in the state's best interest to continue to make this a component of California's public health strategy. Thank you for introducing a bill to continue this important policy.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director

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