



Officers

Muntu Davis, MD, MPH
President
Alameda County

June 9, 2017

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
President-Elect
City of Berkeley

The Honorable Ed Hernandez, Chair
Senate Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

Wilma J. Wooten, MD, MPH
Past President
San Diego County

RE: HOAC Proudly Sponsors AB 511 (Arambula)

Nichole Quick, MD, MPH
Treasurer
Yuba County

Dear Senator Hernandez:

Eric G. Handler, MD, MPH
Secretary
Orange County

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers of California's sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, proudly sponsors AB 511 (Arambula). Building on previous legislative success, AB 511 would replace mandated tuberculosis (TB) testing of certain low-risk populations – people who are neither immunocompromised nor likely to have been exposed to others suffering from active TB – with risk-assessment screening and targeted testing, a practice that is more effective in controlling TB. The changes proposed in AB 511 are recommended by numerous expert public health bodies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the California Tuberculosis Controllers Association (CTCA). Each of these bodies has indicated that universally testing low-risk populations is neither cost-efficient nor effective, and that testing should be reserved for high-risk populations.

Directors at Large

Joseph Iser, MD, DrPH, MSc
Yolo County (retired)

Bela T. Matyas, MD, MPH
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Riverside County

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Karen I. Relucio, MD
Napa County

Sara Cody, MD
Santa Clara County

Robert Benjamin, MD, MPH
Alameda County (Retired)

Low-risk populations included in AB 511 are no more at risk for TB than anyone else in the general population; they include employees and volunteers at heritage schools, foster parents, employees of primary care clinics, students attending schools for the deaf and blind, home care aides, volunteers at crisis nurseries in Community Care Facilities, and parks employees. Nurses are not among the groups included in this bill. AB 511 would provide these low-risk populations with a more individualized standard of care. Using a TB risk-assessment questionnaire developed by CDPH and CTCA, like the one currently used to effectively screen K-12 and community college employees, AB 511 would allow health care providers to individually assess whether further evaluation and testing is warranted, deciding the best course of action for each person in the testing populations. And in the event of a local outbreak or other concern, health officers can order additional testing in their cities or counties, as needed.

Staff Members

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director

Dalia Navarro
Office Manager

Brandon Roberts
Legislative Assistant

AB 511 is also important to the health officers because it would preserve public health resources and help combat the nation's reoccurring shortage of tuberculin, the TB testing antigen used for the purified protein derivative (PPD) skin test. Used

to detect TB, the PPD skin test requires that patients have tuberculin injected under the skin before returning days later for the injection site to be examined. Though a useful test, it is not uncommon for irritation to occur simply because the injected area – usually on the forearm – is touched, causing swelling that falsely indicates a positive result. These false-positive results trigger a series of unnecessary and costly procedures to treat and confirm TB in someone who is not actually infected. The practice of universally testing low-risk populations yields many false-positive results and unnecessarily diverts valuable resources from other more effective disease control and prevention priorities. This is precisely why the leading national and state public health authorities advise against universally testing low-risk populations, like the ones included in AB 511.

HOAC is proud to sponsor AB 511 and respectfully requests your support. Should you have any questions regarding our position on this matter, I invite you to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kat DeBurgh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director

cc The Honorable Joaquin Arambula