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April 8, 2019

The Honorable John Moorlach
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Regarding SB 689 - **Oppose**

Dear Senator Moorlach,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions, must regretfully oppose your SB 689, which limits the ability of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to authorize syringe exchange programs.

HOAC supported the legislation that confirmed the ability of the California Department of Public Health to establish these vital disease-prevention programs. Under current law, CDPH has the ability to empower clinics, health service organizations, community-based organizations, and other entities to establish syringe exchange programs. Such programs are a proven way to minimize the burden of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis among users of injection drugs and those who come into contact with them. These programs have already saved lives across the state. By limiting CDPH's authority, this bill would put these programs out of reach for some of California's most vulnerable residents.

Numerous scientific studies have found that safe access to syringes does not lead to increased drug use. Needle exchange programs save lives. By limiting the authority to establish syringe exchange programs, this bill is a step backward for our state. We must regretfully oppose it.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh
Executive Director