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April 15, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan, MD, MPH
State Capitol, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: HOAC Supports Senate Bill 276

Dear Senator Pan,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California's sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, supports SB 276 (Pan), a bill that would establish a statewide model for approval of medical exemption requests for vaccines required for school entry.

Individuals who are too young to be vaccinated, or who have a medical condition that prevents them from being vaccinated, rely on those around them to keep disease at bay by maintaining community immunity. SB 276 will strengthen community immunity by ensuring that only those with a medical need will be exempted from required vaccinations. Despite the effectiveness of vaccines, California's public health departments have seen a rise in vaccine-preventable diseases such as pertussis and measles. This is largely because many residents are choosing to selectively immunize or opt out of vaccinating their children. These decisions risk the health of the community and can be particularly detrimental - even fatal - to newborns, infants, toddlers, and those living with immunocompromising health conditions.

Community immunity keeps Californians safe and healthy. Threats to community immunity, such as inappropriate medical exemptions, are appropriately a statewide concern. SB 276 recognizes this by requiring medical exemptions to be approved by the state public health officer. The bill also gives authority to local health officers to review existing medical exemptions, another layer of protection to guard against local "hot spots," where community immunity may be at risk.

Thank you for introducing this important bill.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director