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August 10, 2020

The Honorable Freddie Rodriguez  
State Capitol, Room 2188  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 3224 (Rodriguez): Local health department workforce assessment  
As Amended May 4, 2020 – **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Rodriguez:

I write today on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to express our support for your bill, AB 3224, which would require the California Department of Public Health to contract with an appropriate entity to conduct an evaluation of the adequacy of local health department infrastructure, including an assessment of future staffing, workforce, and resource needs.

Local health departments such as ours play a critical role in protecting and promoting the health and well-being of the residents of our jurisdiction. The role and importance of local public health has been most evidently displayed amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other disasters and emergencies faced by our jurisdiction. In carrying out this important work, we rely on a workforce of highly trained and specialized public health professionals, including public health staff such as epidemiologists, health educators, communicable disease investigators, contact tracers, community health workers, public health nurses, public health microbiologists, lab assistants, and others.

Unfortunately, local health departments throughout the state, including Monterey County Health Department, face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining these well-qualified employees due to limited educational opportunities for these specialized professions locally, limited options for advancement within the organization and field, competition with private sector particularly for nurses and microbiologists, and instability of grant funding further limited due to categorical funding streams. These local health department infrastructure and workforce challenges may hamper critical public health protection and promotion activities in our communities and can limit our ability to adequately prepare for and respond to public health emergencies and pandemics.

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AB 3224 would provide an opportunity for state and local governments in California to better understand the adequacy of local health department infrastructure, including needs related to local health department staffing, workforce, and resources. Findings and recommendations produced by this assessment will serve as a useful roadmap in better supporting the development and retention of a skilled and diverse public health workforce necessary to carrying out the vital services we provide to our jurisdiction.

As evidenced by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the role and function of local health departments in California are critical in ensuring the health and safety of California's nearly 40 million residents. Monterey County Health Department is committed to developing and retaining a skilled and diverse public health workforce, and it is for these reasons we respectfully urge your support of AB 3224.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Monterey County's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

**DRAFT**

Chris M. Lopez  
Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: Hon. Bill Monning, 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District  
Hon. Anna Caballero, 12<sup>th</sup> Senate District  
Hon. Mark Stone, 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Hon. Robert Rivas, 30<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)  
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)  
County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC)