



California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michelle Doty Cabrera

Healthcare and Research Director
California State Council of the Service
Employees International Union

Tony Dang

Executive Director
California Walks

James Gilmer, MA

President
Cyrus Urban Network- Multicultural
Community Ventures Initiative

Sharad Jain, MD

Associate Dean for Students, UC Davis
School of Medicine

Iyanrick John

Senior Policy Strategist
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health
Forum

Nomsa Khalfani, PhD

Senior Vice President of Programs +
Strategic Initiatives
Essential Access Health

Janet King, MSW

Program Manager of Policy and Advocacy
Native American Health Center

Mark LeBeau, PhD, MS

Executive Director
California Rural
Indian Health Board

Tana Lepule

Nayamin Martinez, MPH

Director
Central California Environmental Justice
Network (CCEJN)

Jeffrey Reynoso, PhD

Executive Director
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

Elena Santamaria

Policy Advisor
NextGen America

Doretha Williams-Flournoy

President/CEO
California Black Health Network

Doreena Wong, Esq

Director, Health Access Project
Asian Americans Advancing Justice, LA

Sarah de Guia, JD

Executive Director

MAIN OFFICE

1221 Preservation Park Way,
Suite 200
Oakland, CA 94612

SACRAMENTO OFFICE

1107 9th Street, Suite 410
Sacramento, CA 95814

LOS ANGELES OFFICE

672 S. Lafayette Park Place,
Unit 30
Los Angeles, CA 90057

January 11, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: California Surgeon General Position – Support

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN), I write to applaud your decision to establish the position of California Surgeon General, focused on a comprehensive approach to addressing health risks and challenges, including identifying social determinants of health and persistent inequities in the health of communities.

About CPEHN

CPEHN was established over 25 years ago to unite California's communities of color to advocate for the reduction and elimination of health disparities by engaging consumers in decision making. Since 1992, we have been at the forefront of advancing health equity and eliminating health disparities by improving access to health care services and the environments in which people live, work, and play. In 2012, CPEHN was instrumental in the establishment of the Office of Health Equity, whose mission is to provide leadership in reducing health and mental health disparities faced by vulnerable populations. Since that time, CPEHN has advocated for and won significant gains in health coverage for communities of color including equitable implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), better integration of mental health and dental care, and improved access to culturally and linguistically relevant services.

The Need for a Strong Focus on Health Equity

California is one of the most diverse states in the nation with a majority of its population, over 60 percent, comprising communities of color. The Latino community constitutes 38 percent of the state's population while Asian Pacific Islanders and African Americans make up another 20 percent. Of the 14 million lives enrolled in Medi-Cal in California alone, an overwhelming majority of these individuals and families (80%) are from communities of color, with 30% speaking Spanish as a primary language. In addition, a majority of individuals enrolled in Covered California (66%) are from communities of color, with 10% speaking Spanish as a primary language. Shortly, the nation as a whole will see similar demographic shifts. By 2045, people of color will represent a majority of the nation's population. Already 11 other states are at or close to a majority population

of color.

California has been a leader in advancing health equity and expanding access to health care services under the Affordable Care Act. Yet we have a long way to go in living up to our promise of health for all. Persistent health disparities exist for communities of color, with no signs of decreasing without appropriate health system interventions that include a targeted focus on disparities reduction and elimination strategies. For example, in California, Latinos and African Americans have twice the prevalence of type 2 diabetes and are twice as likely to die from the disease as non-Hispanic Whites. The prevalence of current asthma among American Indians and Alaska Natives is three times greater than the state average. African Americans have exceptionally higher rates of asthma prevalence (40%), four times higher asthma emergency department visit and hospitalization rates, and two times higher asthma death rates than Whites in California. Further, Black women and infants are far more likely to die than their counterparts.

In addition, mental health is a particularly pressing issue for communities that have faced historic trauma and discrimination and those who face current traumas related to immigration, community violence, and poverty. American Indians and Alaska Natives are 40% more likely than Whites to have experienced serious psychological distress during the past year, and though it is estimated that Asians and Pacific Islanders have a rate of serious mental illness similar to that of Whites, this overlooks important differences between Asian ethnic groups, with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults having the highest rate of depressive disorders among all racial groups.

Recommendations

For these reasons, we are thrilled to see you propose significant investments in initiatives that would reduce or eliminate longstanding health disparities, including screening both children and adults for exposure to trauma and rewarding health plans and providers for delivering better care. We stand ready to work with you to implement these bold initiatives.

We believe that the California Surgeon General can provide much needed leadership to eliminate inequities that have existed for far too long. While California has instituted components of this work across state government, including the Office of Health Equity, statewide vision and implementation is sorely needed. In order to actualize this vision, we recommend the following considerations for the California Surgeon General:

- Provide authority for the California Surgeon General to work across state agencies and departments to identify the most pressing health disparities and implement cross-sectoral approaches.
- Prioritize hiring a candidate with significant experience working with communities of color, LGBTQ communities, immigrants and persons with

limited English capacity to future programs, initiatives, and investments are effective at eliminating the root causes of health inequities.

- Collaborate with existing initiatives, including the Office of Health Equity in the California Department of Public Health and Health in All Policies Taskforce under the Strategic Growth Council, in order to maximum impact.
- Provide for meaningful stakeholder input in the development of goals and activities of the California Surgeon General through the establishment of an advisory committee with consumer and community representation, drawing on the strength of our communities to effectuate real change.
- Adequately fund and staff the California Surgeon General to be able to provide the infrastructure necessary for the importance of this work and include opportunities to fund community organizations to partner with and carry out the mission of the Office.

Thank you for offering a bold vision within the first week of your tenure. We look forward to working with you to accomplish the change you seek for a better California. We would like to schedule a meeting with your office to review these recommendations and discuss the potential for collaboration. In the meantime, my contact information is sdeguia@cpehn.org or 510.832.1160.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah de Guia', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sarah de Guia
Executive Director
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Cc: Daniel Zingale, Senior Advisor for Strategy and Communications
Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary