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A Proposed Legislative Fund Could Help to Close Racial, Health Gap

A groundbreaking California Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, proposed by nearly 200 leading public health and equity organizations and advocates for inclusion in the California budget, will play a leading role in bridging the state's racial and health gap that largely impacts communities of color and underinvested communities.

With a budget surplus of more than \$75 billion, the California legislature recently proposed \$100 million a year for nonprofit organizations to bolster health equity and racial justice as part of the broader investments in public health.

Throughout California, people of color, LGBTQ+, immigrants, people with disabilities, and low-income community members endure some of the worst community conditions and barriers in access to health care, resulting in poorer health outcomes and shorter life spans.

These same barriers, caused by structural and systemic racism, poverty, violence and trauma, the lack of affordable and accessible healthcare, housing and healthy food, greater exposure to environmental hazards, and resulting chronic disease also put people of color at greater risk of illness and death from COVID-19. All of these deep-rooted issues over time have had a devastating impact on communities of color and underinvested communities.

The Fund builds on a current bill, AB 1038 (Gipson, Carillo), and focuses on both health equity and racial justice, which must go hand-in-hand. Funding would help to support community-based organizations, public health departments, and tribal organizations who are doing on-the-ground work in their communities to address factors contributing to health and health outcomes, and systemic racism.

The proposed funding could go towards:

- **A Health Equity Fund** and support organizations to take action in reducing health inequities they identify at the local level, by using policy, systems and environmental changes to address factors closely related to

health and health outcomes such as: 1) housing, 2) healthy food access, 3) economic stability, 4) schools and childcare, 5) community violence and other related issues.

- **A Racial Justice Innovation Fund** to support bold, innovative projects and partnerships that change statewide institutional, governance, and data systems for racial justice.
- **Community programs** that reduce specific factors responsible for the unequal burden of leading causes of death and illness among communities of color in California, including but not limited to diabetes and heart disease.

This proposal is supported by: Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL), Black Women for Wellness Action Project, California Black Health Network, California Black Women's Health Project, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, Public Health Advocates and Public Health Institute, Roots Community Health Center and Roots of Change.