



January 28, 2021

The Honorable Phil Ting  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5094  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**In re: California Budget Investments in Lung Health**

Dear Chairs Skinner and Ting:

On behalf of the American Lung Association, we are writing as the Legislature considers Governor Newsom's recent 2021-2022 budget proposals regarding public health, COVID-19, tobacco control, healthcare, and air quality and climate investments. We are deeply aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed tremendous hardships on Californians, exposing disparities and the urgency of addressing the multiple lung health crises facing Californians predating the pandemic. We respectfully ask that the legislature prioritize funding to address critical lung health issues facing Californians today.

We appreciate many of the elements in Governor Newsom's proposal focused on addressing COVID-19, tobacco control, access to healthcare, and our air pollution and climate change crises in the 2021-2022 budget proposal. We recognize that the budget process is a critical step in the California's effort to improve lung health, and appreciate the opportunity to comment on the following elements under consideration:

**COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution:** COVID-19 has shaken the nation and our state to immeasurable depths. In California, more than 33,000 residents have lost their lives. It is critical to further protect the overall population and those most vulnerable that need a sufficiently high proportion of the population to get vaccinated to stop coronavirus transmission. The American Lung Association strongly supports the efforts of the state to expand testing and vaccine distribution, including the \$2 billion to expand COVID-19 testing, \$473 million to improve contact tracing and \$372 million for vaccine distribution. As the coronavirus continues to spread, we need continued vigilance as well as universal acceptance of the vaccine in every community in order to save lives. Only through widespread vaccination will we be able to achieve the herd immunity needed to stop the spread of the virus, save lives and protect those most vulnerable among us, such as older Americans, those living with a lung disease and communities disproportionately impacted by the disease.

**Tobacco Control and Increased Access to Cessation Services for California Residents:** The lung health of California residents has never been more relevant. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S., making it critically important that prevention and cessation programs area available to help people break their tobacco addiction for good. Flavored tobacco hooks young people and can result in a lifetime of nicotine addiction.

Ensuring that the sale of flavored tobacco products is prohibited across the state is an essential step towards a tobacco free future for California. Another step towards preventing the use of tobacco is ensuring there is adequate funding for prevention and cessation programs. Ways to implement strong restrictions against the sale of flavored tobacco as well as how to improve cessation services in California can be found in our recent report, the [State of Tobacco Control](#) 2021 report, which grades the state in various tobacco control categories. While California provides comprehensive coverage for all tobacco cessation medications and types of counseling for Medicaid enrollees, there is room for growth in state employee health plans and private insurance. While state employee health plans include some medications and some counseling, not all are covered. The American Lung Association calls for increased access to cessation services for California residents.

**Healthcare Affordability:** We support the Governor’s proposal to create the new Office of Health Care Affordability, to increase healthcare quality and cost transparency. Now more than ever, it is imperative to remove as many barriers to quality healthcare as possible and protect the lung health of Californians in all the ways we can. We look forward to the implementation of the policies this new office will put into place so that more Californians can be protected.

**Investments in Air Quality and Climate Health:** Largely due to the transportation sector, California is home to the most difficult air pollution challenges in the United States according to the Lung Association’s [State of the Air](#) 2020 report, and climate change is making the path to clean air more difficult. The burdens of poor air quality increase the risk of a wide range of lung, heart, and other health impacts. Air pollution disproportionately impact our most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, and emerging evidence highlights the [links between air pollution and severe COVID-19 impacts](#). According to the American Lung Association’s recent [Road to Clean Air](#) report, the widespread transition to zero-emission transportation could yield up to \$22 billion in annual public health benefits in California. For those reasons, we welcomed the proposals focused on accelerating investment in zero-emission transportation and infrastructure, and community air protection programs, including:

*Accelerating investment in Zero Emission Transportation Infrastructure*

The American Lung Association supports the proposed \$1 billion investment in zero-emission infrastructure based on the reauthorization and securitization of existing clean transportation funding programs as a critical opportunity to advance our clean air, climate, and health equity goals. Enacting this plan in 2021 is critical to setting the path to better health and cleaner air as we recover from the pandemic.

*Prioritizing Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: Heavy Duty Vehicles and Equity Programs*

The American Lung Association supports the priority areas outlined in Governor Newsom’s proposals for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). Specifically, we are supportive of priority funding for zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicle technologies and increasing equitable access to the benefits of zero-emission transportation, including through the Clean Cars 4 All program. Early action on this funding is critical, as is the development of consistent, ongoing funding to maintain progress in eliminating combustion impacts on Californians, and especially those most impacted and vulnerable to transportation pollution.

*AB 617 Community Protection Program:* The American Lung Association urges the Legislature to continue priority spending to reduce air pollution burdens in the state’s most impacted communities through the AB 617 Community Air Protection Program. As the program implementation continues, and the roster of priority communities expands, we support high

priority to ensure support for targeted monitoring and clean-up, community engagement and local implementation.

In closing, the American Lung Association appreciates your attention to the multiple, urgent, and ongoing lung health crises facing Californians. We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature and Governor Newsom to ensure the greatest possible investments to address the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding access to healthcare and reducing harms caused by tobacco and harmful air pollution. Please don't hesitate to contact Erica Costa ([erica.costa@lung.org](mailto:erica.costa@lung.org)) for lung health issues or Will Barrett ([william.barrett@lung.org](mailto:william.barrett@lung.org)) for air/climate issues for additional information.

Sincerely,

Erica Costa  
Director, Tobacco Control and Lung Health

Will Barrett  
Director, Clean Air Advocacy

cc:

Senator Bob Wieckowski, Chair of Senate Budget Subcommittee 2

Senator Susan Eggman, Chair of Senate Budget Subcommittee 3

Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula, Chair of Assembly Budget Subcommittee 1

Assemblymember Richard Bloom, Chair of Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3