



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 2/25/2020

File #: 20-150

To: Board of Supervisors

From: DHHS: Public Health

Agenda Section: Departmental

SUBJECT:

Resolution Recognizing the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory in Regard to the Investigation of a Bioterrorism Event at Pelican Bay State Prison

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the attached resolution recognizing the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory;
2. Receive a presentation from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - Public Health related to the resolution; and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to return a certified copy of the attached resolution to DHHS - Public Health.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Public Health Fund

DISCUSSION:

The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (HCPHL) serves the local community providing daily services to healthcare providers, local hospitals and the general public. Their services include drinking water testing; beach water testing; rabies and tick testing; blood lead testing; and clinical testing for local providers for communicable diseases such as influenza, measles, norovirus, pertussis and many others. The laboratory plays an integral role in many facets of DHHS - Public Health's daily work to protect the population from disease or other risk, including communicable disease surveillance, emergency response, consumer protection and more. The HCPHL is a vital piece to the entire DHHS - Public Health team. A variety of programs such as Communicable Disease and Environmental Health rely on the laboratory to enhance their ability to provide community-appropriate services. The HCPHL also works closely with local law enforcement, first responders, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect our community from potential bioterrorism threats.

The CDC's nationwide Laboratory Response Network (LRN), a network dedicated to responding to adverse events, recently recognized the HCPHL for its key role in an event at the Pelican Bay State

Prison in Del Norte County. On July 23, 2019 the laboratory received two high-risk environmental samples submitted by the FBI for testing to screen for the presence of biological threats. HCPHL staff worked carefully, but rapidly, until just past midnight when the results revealed that the samples were preliminary positive for the neurotoxin ricin. This prompted alerts to the FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator, CDC experts and leadership, Pelican Bay Prison Officials and local and state public health partners. HCPHL staff oversaw the chain of custody of evidence and assisted the FBI and CDC in packaging and shipment of the evidence and samples for confirmation. This incident strengthened HCPHL's existing relationships and allowed for an opportunity to develop new ones. As a result, the HCPHL was highlighted by the Association of Public Health Laboratories on Oct. 29, 2019 in a blog post titled, "Humboldt County Public Health Lab was ready for ricin, thanks to LRN," which provides an excellent summary of the event. A link to this post is included in the attached HCPHL Overview of Services.

Before your Board today is a resolution recognizing the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory for its exemplary efforts in not just this recent event but in the daily services they provide.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Adoption of this resolution has no impact on Public Health funds. There is no impact to the county General Fund.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by protecting vulnerable populations and providing community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution Recognizing the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory in Regard to the Investigation of a Bioterrorism Event at Pelican Bay State Prison
2. Letter and Certificate of Recognition from the Laboratory Response Network
3. Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory Overview of Services

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

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