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FOR PRESS INQUIRIES CONTACT: Sage Miller & Milena Paez

– smiller@cccbha.org, milena.paez@nextgenpolicy.org

Press Release – *Let's Talk About It: What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines on May 25th*

California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies and NextGen Policy host a virtual event aimed at providing up-to-date COVID-19 vaccine information impacting California's most vulnerable communities.

Sacramento, CA - To date, 61,603 Californians have died from COVID-19. That's 61,603 families who have experienced trauma and loss that has had a rippling effect on communities. BIPOC communities have suffered at a disproportional rate from the COVID-19 pandemic, in large part because of the racial pandemic that has been going on in this country long before COVID-19. Black Americans are dying from COVID-19 at nearly 2.5 times the rate of their white counterparts (61.6 deaths compared to 26.2 deaths per 100,000 people) [i]. Nearly half (49 percent) of the Latinx population say they or someone in their household had to take a pay cut or lost their job (or both) due to COVID-19, compared to 33 percent of all U.S. adults [ii]. As communities grapple with the trauma and loss from the COVID-19 and racial pandemics, we must have an open and honest dialogue about how to protect BIPOC communities moving forward, despite the inequities that exist not only in healthcare but every aspect of American society.

Let's Talk About It: What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines, hosted by the **California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA)** and our partners at **NextGen Policy on May 25th, from 4 PM to 6 PM PST**, will be a safe place to learn more about vaccination options and address questions. Interested parties can learn more and register [here](#).

There will be two panels, the first, of medical professionals from BIPOC communities, moderated by **Courtney Dempsey of Good Day Sacramento**, and featuring:

- ❖ *Dr. Janine Bera, Chief Medical Officer, WellSpace Health,*
- ❖ *Dr. Olivia Kasirye, Public Health Officer, Sacramento County,*
- ❖ *Dr. David Pating, Sr. Physician Specialist, San Francisco Department of Public Health (Behavioral Health), and*
- ❖ *Dr. Gina Warren, President & Chief Executive Officer, Neighborhood Wellness Foundation.*

Our second panel, moderated by **Kim Bojórquez of the Sacramento Bee**, will highlight community leaders including:



- ❖ Jessie Armenta, Clinical Director, La Familia Counseling Center,
- ❖ Anni Chung, President and Chief Executive Officer, Self Help for the Elderly,
- ❖ Basim Elkarra, Executive Director, CAIR-Sacramento Valley (CAIR-SV),
- ❖ Bishop Parnell M. Lovelace, Jr., Founding Pastor, Center of Praise in Sacramento,
- ❖ Harbans Singh Sraon, Ph.D., R.Ph.T., Professor and Scientist, and
- ❖ Reverend Kevin Kitrell Ross, Senior Minister and Chief Executive Officer, Unity of Sacramento.

The event's keynote speaker is **California's first Surgeon General, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris!** Join us on May 25th from 4 PM to 6 PM PST as we engage in dialogue on how we can keep all communities in California healthy.

"COVID-19 has had a severe and traumatic impact on our communities in California and across the nation, with BIPOC communities enduring a disproportional amount of trauma," noted **CBHA's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Le Ondra Clark Harvey**. "To combat inequities and strengthen the health of our communities, we must engage in dialogue with policymakers, community leaders, medical professionals, and the public about keeping our communities safe. CBHA would like to thank our panelists, moderators, and the California Surgeon General, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, for joining us for this critical event."

"Covid-19 escalated the trauma and disproportionate inequities within the BIPOC communities, NextGen Policy is appreciative of the knowledge being shared by our panelists as well as our partnership with CBHA. We are looking forward to having this thoughtful and informative conversation to move this important discussion forward," **Courtne Thomas, NextGen Policy Mental Health Policy Advisor**.

"Sheltering in place is different for different neighborhoods. COVID-19 presented another contributor of chronic toxic stress and revealed the scope and magnitude of the generational inequities in our Black and Brown communities," said **Dr. Gina Warren, President & Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Wellness Foundation**. "Remember, how people respond to the vaccine is dictated by life experiences. Rather than shaming, listen to understand perspective and educate with patience and care so we may guide them to improve their overall health and wellness. Thank you, CBHA and NextGen Policy. Together, let us amplify the voices of our communities who are tired of being disproportionately impacted and demand resources necessary to live a full life."