



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 5
File #: 21-772

Board Meeting Date: 10/5/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisor David J. Canepa, District 5
Subject: Resolution Declaring Health Misinformation a Crisis

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution to declare health misinformation a public health crisis.

BACKGROUND:

Health misinformation has caused widespread confusion among the public and, both locally and nationally, has prompted eligible people to decline COVID-19 vaccines; reject public health measures, such as masking and physical distancing; and use unproven treatments for COVID-19 infections.

On July 15th, 2021, the United States Surgeon General issued his first advisory describing the "urgent threat" posed by the rise of false information around COVID-19 - one that continues to put "lives at risk" and prolong the pandemic.

DISCUSSION:

Health misinformation has significantly undermined public health efforts and the unmitigated proliferation of health misinformation has created a culture of mistrust and has prolonged the COVID-19 pandemic, endangering the health and safety of all individuals in San Mateo County and throughout the State and country.

Recent surges in infections and hospitalization from COVID-19 have highlighted the importance of clear and unequivocal communications from public officials that vaccines are the best protection against severe illness and hospitalization.

Health misinformation should be declared a public health crisis and the County of San Mateo should redouble its commitment to combating health misinformation and curbing the spread of falsehoods that threaten the health and safety of our residents.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None