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May 15, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Appropriations Committee Suspense Hearing

Dear Assembly Member Wicks,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), proudly representing all 58 of California's counties, writes to share the county perspective on pending legislation. We acknowledge the considerable work ahead and the difficult decisions that will be weighed in the coming weeks and appreciate your careful consideration of fiscal impacts to local government budgets and the core services they provide. There is truth to the time-honored Sacramento adage that "this year's bills are next year's budget." As the state and county budgets are woven together, legislation that affects the state will, in turn, affect the bottom line for county governments and impact core state services delivered by counties. Considering the many serious cuts included in the Administration's 2024-25 May Revision, the role and decisions of this committee are more important than ever.

In addition to the individual letters that you will receive regarding specific legislation, we respectfully offer the following county positions for your consideration:

Counties urge you to reject any new state-mandated local programs.

According to the State Controller's Office's state-mandated program cost report of unpaid claims and deficiencies, the state owes local governments nearly \$1 billion as of April 2024 for work conducted and costs incurred to comply with state-mandated programs.¹ Notable state-mandated local programs that comprise part of the backlog of payments for work counties continue to complete and fund locally includes providing vote-by-mail ballots, testing of sexual assault evidence kits, and behavioral health crisis training for law enforcement. Every bill that is passed that imposes a state-mandated local program could increase the backlog of unpaid reimbursement claims owed to local governments, as mandated programs are not eligible for reimbursement until years after the mandate has been signed into law.

Adding further pressure, to address revenue constraints or the increasing costs, the state has suspended some mandated programs, wherein the program remains in law, however local governments are not required to comply with the state-mandated requirements in that fiscal year and the state has no reimbursement

¹ [SCO: State-Mandated Program Cost Report of Unpaid Claims and Deficiencies - April 2024](#)

obligation. However, as the greater public expects a existing level of service from local governments to continue and the intricacies of state-budget balancing via suspending state-mandated programs is not intuitive, local governments often continue to perform suspended services and operate suspended programs to meet public expectations. There are 56 suspended programs, including coroner's costs, sudden infant death syndrome autopsies, adoption and care of stray and abandoned animals, domestic violence background checks, local coastal plans, inmate AIDS testing, missing persons reports, and more.

For these reasons, CSAC regrettably [opposes](#) AB 2591 (Quirk-Silva) because this measure creates a new mandated local program by requiring cities and counties to establish a youth commission in response to petitions from high school pupils enrolled in their jurisdiction; thereby overriding the structure of the existing ninety-nine local youth commissions that were developed based on local needs and conditions. Conservatively, local jurisdictions will incur costs related to liability insurance, travel, background checks, mandated reporter training for staff, and Brown Act training for commission members, and more. Given the serious fiscal challenges that exist at all levels of government in 2024, it is imprudent to ask counties to dedicate already scarce resources to new programs over preserving core county services.

Unnecessary, Inflexible, and Costly: Legislation that Threatens County Workforce

CSAC is committed to preserving county government flexibility to manage their workforce, conduct governance, and provide services in a manner that resolves the day-to-day problems their communities face, in a manner that meets the unique needs of their region. To this end, CSAC opposes three measures that will exacerbate already-demanding caseloads and workloads for existing county staff, and will not assist counties in hiring and keeping a public sector workforce that can meet the needs of our communities:

AB 2489 (Ward) Local agencies: contracts for special services and temporary help. ([Oppose](#)) and AB 2557 (Ortega) Local agencies: contracts for special services and temporary help: performance reports. ([Oppose](#))

Together, these measures attempt to curb counties' authority for contracting. For decades, counties have used contractors to provide a variety of local programs and services that, given our current public sector workforce shortages, would be difficult to provide without their capable assistance. With the additional, burdensome reporting obligations and requirements of these measures, we expect that fewer non-profit providers, community-based organizations, and other private service providers will be willing to engage with local agencies. Further, without the support and flexibility to augment the capacity of existing county staff, these measures will exacerbate already-demanding caseloads and workloads for our existing staff. Given the extensive application of the measures, we can easily anticipate costs associated with this measure in the hundreds of millions of dollars statewide.

AB 2561 (McKinnor) Local public employees: vacant positions. [Oppose](#)

This measure imposes one-size-fits-all policies, procedures, deadlines, and thresholds with an intent to reduce the vacancy rate of county staff without acknowledging any of the external factors that affect workforce recruitment and retention. The stringent requirements of this measure will be incredibly taxing on county staff and financial resources and will likely result in diversion of county staff away from core service delivery to reach compliance. Counties are competing with both the private sector and other government agencies for specialized positions such as behavioral health classifications and peace officers, while also facing a nationwide workforce shortage and overall tight labor market. Moreover, this measure will create more bureaucracy, and contribute to higher county workforce vacancy rates.

Additionally, counties are opposed to or oppose unless amended the following legislation:

- AB 2149 (Connolly) Gates: standards: inspection. [Oppose Unless Amended](#)
- AB 2404 (Lee) State and local public employees: labor relations: strikes. [Oppose](#)
- AB 2421 (Low) Employer-employee relations: confidential communications. [Oppose](#)
- AB 2535 (Bonta) Trade Corridor Enhancement Program. [Oppose Unless Amended](#)
- AB 2591 (Quirk-Silva) Local government: youth commissions. [Oppose](#)
- AB 2625 (Bryan) Courts: notification system. [Oppose](#)
- AB 2751 (Haney) Employer communications during nonworking hours. [Oppose](#)
- AB 2882 (McCarty) California Community Corrections Performance Incentives [Oppose](#)

Lastly, counties support the following legislation:

- AB 1878 (Garcia) Housing programs: tribal housing program. [Support](#)
- AB 1956 (Reyes) Victim services. [Support](#)
- AB 1975 (Bonta) Medi-Cal: medically supportive food and nutrition interventions. [Support](#)
- AB 2050 (Pellerin) Voter registration database: Electronic Registration Information Center [Support](#)
- AB 2051 (Bonta) Psychology interjurisdictional compact. [Support](#)
- AB 2060 (Soria) Lake and streambed alteration agreements: exemptions [Support](#)
- AB 2061 Sales and Use Tax: exemptions: zero-emission public transportation ferries. (Wilson) [Support](#)
- AB 2104 (Soria) Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program. [Support](#)
- AB 2289 (Low) Vehicles: parking placards and special license plates for disabled veterans and persons with disabilities [Support](#)
- AB 2432 (Gabriel) Corporations: criminal enhancements. [Support](#)

- AB 2469 (Committee on Energy Management) Emergency Management Assistance Compact: California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program. [Support](#)
- AB 2485 (Carrillo, J) Regional housing need: determination. [Support](#)
- AB 2501 (Alvarez) Water quality control plans: donations and grants [Support](#)
- AB 2564 (Boerner) Property tax postponement: Senior Citizens and Disabled Citizens Property Tax Postponement Fund [Support](#)
- AB 2594 (Committee on Energy Management) Emergency services: mutual aid: gap analysis. [Support](#)
- AB 2736 (Carrillo, J) Veterans: benefits. [Support](#)
- AB 2774 (Grayson) Childcare for Working Families Act. [Support](#)
- AB 2813 (Aguiar-Curry) Government Investment Act. [Support](#)
- AB 2871 (Maienschein) Overdose fatality review teams. [Support](#)
- AB 2982 (Reyes) Prenatal-to-3 working group. [Support](#)
- AB 3023 (Papan) Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: interagency funding strategy: state watershed restoration plans: forest resilience plans: grant program guidelines. [Support](#)
- AB 3073 (Haney) Wastewater testing: illicit substances. [Support](#)
- AB 3134 (Chen) Property taxation: refunds. [Support](#)

At the end of the day –

Counties appreciate the continued engagement to strengthen state and local relationships, and to realize the opportunities to safeguard fiscal resources to best support the people we collectively serve. Should you have any questions regarding the information outlined in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With deep respect,



Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez
Chief Policy Officer
California State Association of Counties

CC: Honorable Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Jay M. Dickenson, Chief Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee