



OFFICERS

President

Bruce Gibson
San Luis Obispo County

1st Vice President

Jeff Griffiths
Inyo County

2nd Vice President

Susan Ellenberg
Santa Clara County

Past President

Chuck Washington
Riverside County



CEO

Graham Knaus

August 9, 2024

The Honorable Anna M. Caballero
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Consideration of Fiscal Impacts for County Governments
Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing: Thursday, August 15, 2024**

Dear Senator Caballero,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), proudly representing all 58 of California's counties, writes to share the county perspective on pending legislation before your committee. We thank you for making time to meet with us at this critical (and hectic) time, and acknowledge the considerable work ahead as you consider hundreds of measures before the 2023-2024 Legislative Session comes to a close.

This year's bills are next year's budget. As we emphasized earlier this year, the state and county budgets are woven together. Legislation that affects the state will, in turn, affect the bottom line for county governments. In addition to the individual letters that you have received regarding specific legislation, we respectfully offer the following comments and county positions for your consideration:

Counties Balance Past, Present, and Future Obligations

California's counties implore you to consider every bill before the committee through the lens of its unique impacts on California's local governments, the historical context, and to consider both the longstanding and recently enacted policies that each new bill will affect, or potentially disrupt. Expressly, to reach the best decisions, it is critical to purposefully seek out the ground truth context that shapes our present moment in time. We know you do that, and we remain committed to close collaboration and partnership to achieve our shared goals and serve Californians.

Below are notable programs that counties are diligently carrying out on behalf of the state. At this critical moment in time, California's counties share a common concern that more requirements or new programs may dilute the power and focus of already limited county resources to successfully implement the following programs and new initiatives:

- SB 43 (Eggman, 2023) Lanterman-Petris Short Act Expansion
- SB 272 (Laird, 2023) Local Coast Plans: Sea Level Rise Predictions
- SB 525 (Durazo, 2023) Increased Minimum Wage for Health Care Workers

- SB 1383 (Lara, 2016) Organic Waste Diversion and Short-Lived Climate Pollutants
- Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act
- Proposition 1: Revisions to the Mental Health Services Act
- CalAIM: Medi-Cal Transformation
- California Air Resources Board Advanced Clean Fleets Regulations
- Realignment of the Division of Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Justice Reform

As you consider what legislation may be chaptered this fall, please consider the growing layers of county responsibility and the need to focus on the success of recent initiatives at a time of dwindling resources.

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.

Zooming Out: California Exists Within the National Context

County elections officials will be managing the contentious and labor-intensive presidential election in November 2024. We have also seen the toll that polarization and distrust in government has taken on our county workforce. Concurrently, counties will be in the second quarter of the 2024-25 fiscal year, implementing the state's priorities included in the 2024 Budget Act, and preparing to implement recently chaptered legislation after the close of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session. Often, California counties are in a dual position of implementing newly chaptered programs and dedicating enough time and resources to ensure a safe and secure election. Every bill that is passed that adds new or increased levels of responsibility for counties without commensurate fiscal support impacts the ability to carry out critical, foundational county functions.

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 two 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:

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

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

Despite numerous sets of amendments that have made this bill a moving target, AB 2557 remains overly burdensome, unclear, exceptionally costly, and inappropriately inflexible, and addresses no specific, current problem. The extensive reporting, posting, and contracting requirements of the bill have no clear benefits. By diverting scarce public resources from service delivery to additional layers of bureaucracy, AB 2557 will likely result in worse outcomes for vulnerable communities and diminished local services for our residents. AB 2557 will not improve services, reduce costs, or protect employees.

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

Local agencies agree with the author that the status quo is not sustainable. However, in its current form, the measure does not address the root causes of low labor force participation rates in California across all sectors. Instead, the measure will create additional layers of bureaucracy that will detract from meaningful efforts to recruit and retain the public sector workforce, and will re-open MOUs that should be subject to the regular collective bargaining process. We appreciate the astute committee analysis, and concur with the concerns about mandated costs as well as costs to CalHR and the potential to create federal violations for the agency.

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

AB 884 (Low) Elections: language accessibility *Oppose unless amended.*

AB 2149 (Connolly) Gates: standards: inspection. *Oppose unless amended.*

AB 2421 (Low) Employer-employee relations: confidential communications. *Oppose.*

AB 2496 (Pellerin) Liability claims: foster family agencies and noncustodial adoption agencies. *Oppose unless amended.*

AB 2560 (Alvarez) Density Bonus Law: California Coastal Act of 1976. *Oppose.*

AB 2882 (McCarty) California Community Corrections Performance Incentives. *Oppose.*

Lastly, counties support the following legislation:

AB 637 (Jackson) Zero-emission vehicles: fleet owners: rental vehicles.

AB 1597 (Alvarez) Water quality: California-Mexico cross-border watersheds.

AB 1878 (Garcia) Housing programs: tribal housing program.

AB 2050 (Pellerin) Voter registration database: Electronic Registration Information Center

AB 2060 (Soria) Lake and streambed alteration agreements: exemptions.

AB 2061 (Wilson) Sales and Use Tax: exemptions: zero-emission public transportation ferries.

AB 2104 (Soria) Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program.

AB 2223 (Aguiar-Curry) Cannabis: industrial hemp.

AB 2455 (Gabriel) Whistleblower protection: state and local government procedures.

AB 2469 (Committee on Emergency Management) Emergency Management Assistance Compact: California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program.

August 9, 2024

Page 4 of 4

AB 2485 (Carrillo, Juan) Regional housing need: determination.

AB 2564 (Boerner) Property tax postponement: Senior Citizens and Disabled Citizens Property Tax Postponement Fund.

AB 2643 (Wood) Cannabis cultivation: environmental remediation.

AB 2660 (Committee on Emergency Management) Office of Emergency Services: federal grant funding.

AB 2704 (Zbur) In-home supportive services: criminal background checks.

AB 2736 (Carrillo, Juan) Veterans: benefits.

AB 2774 (Grayson) Childcare for Working Families Act.

AB 2902 (Wood) Organic waste: reduction regulations: exemptions.

AB 2934 (Ward) Residential developments: building standards: review.

AB 3023 (Papan) Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: interagency funding strategy: state watershed restoration plans: forest resilience plans: grant program guidelines.

AB 3150 (Quirk-Silva) Fire safety: fire hazard severity zones: defensible space: State Fire Marshal.

AB 3179 (Carrillo, Juan) Emergency telecommunications medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles.

AB 3233 (Addis) Oil and gas: operations: restrictions: local authority.

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 Senate Appropriations Committee
Mark McKenzie, Staff Director, Senate Appropriations Committee