May 22, 2018

The Honorable Holly Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Philip Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Budget Item 9210 – County Property Tax Backfill and Request for TOT

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting:

On behalf of the County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors, I write in support of the revised allocation to local governments for property tax backfill provided in Budget Item 9210. The May Revise contains property tax backfill for Santa Barbara County and other Southern California Counties which were affected by the Thomas Fire.

We respectfully request that additional opportunities for county backfill – including transient occupancy tax - be considered as part of the final budget package. Specifically, the County would like to respectfully request a backfill of $2.58 million of lost Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues this fiscal year and next as a result of the closure of two hotel properties in the Santa Barbara County. The two hotel properties account for 62% of the TOT revenue to the County. In other events across the State, emergency workers coming into the area for disaster response fill rooms and make up lost tourist dollars. This is not the case with these properties, which were damaged and closed as a result of the disaster. Hotels in nearby cities appear to have experienced higher occupancies, but those related tax dollars did not benefit Santa Barbara County government, which is responsible for most of the disaster costs and recovery activities.

As you know, Santa Barbara County has suffered devastating losses that resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage, disrupting thousands of lives, businesses and government services due to the Thomas Fire, which was the largest wildfire in California in history. After weeks of wildfires, the Santa Barbara County continued to suffer devastating mudslides, which created tremendous loss and resulted in infrastructure damage, thousands of cubic yards of debris, property loss and multiple fatalities. The proposed allocation will be critical to ensure that the County can deliver the services anticipated and expected by their communities, both as local program offerings and also on behalf of the State.
We appreciate you working with our County on the ongoing challenges facing local government, private businesses and homeowners in rebuilding. We recognize that the State is aware that the ongoing effects of the Thomas Fire as well as the January mud and debris flow are not over. The situation remains a potential threat for further incomprehensible damage.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and all of your work on helping our community.

Sincerely,

Cliff Berg
Governmental Advocates, Inc.

cc: Diane Cummings, Special Assistant to Governor Edmond G. Brown Jr.
    Members, Assembly Budget Committee
    Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
    Susan Chan, Consultant, Assembly Sub Committee #3 on Resources and Transportation
    Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
    Joe Stephenshaw, Chief Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
    Joanne Roy, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
    Assemblymember Monique Limon, 37th Assembly District
    Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, 13th Senate District
    Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
    Members, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
    Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
    Dennis Bozanich, Legislative Coordinator, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors