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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 15, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 361 (Rivas) - Request for Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill 361 (Rivas), which will provide additional flexibility for local city councils, boards, commissions, and other agencies to meet remotely via phone or videoconference during a Governor-declared emergency that makes meeting in person unsafe, while still maintaining high levels of public access and transparency.

While the County welcomes the opportunity to return to in-person public meetings and events, allowing flexibility for local governments to conduct business remotely would allow for immunocompromised individuals to continue to work safely, while at the same time allow for local government to provide more accessibility to underserved communities.

AB 361 would allow local agencies to safely meet remotely during an emergency. The changes to law included in AB 361 are what have allowed local agencies to continue to operate while also complying with important public health directives issued by officials during the COVID-19 pandemic; by enshrining these provisions in statute, this bill ensures that local agencies would continue to be able to remain safe in future emergencies that threaten public health.

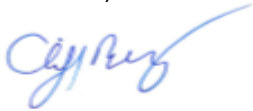
This bill will include important safeguards that ensure public agency transparency and public access. For a public agency to utilize these provisions to meet remotely, a local agency must meet subsequent or concurrent to a proclaimed state of emergency or declared local emergency, and declare that the nature of the emergency would prevent them from safely meeting in-person. AB 361 would specifically prohibit local agencies from requiring members of the public to submit their comments in advance, guaranteeing that the public has the opportunity to observe and offer comment during the meeting.

Technology has allowed local governments to remain efficient and accessible in the midst of a global pandemic, therefore local governments need to remain proactive and use modern technology not only in day-to-day business, but to improve the diversity of government and our appointed commissions all while reducing our carbon footprint.

The Board of Supervisors adopted a 2021 Legislative Platform which includes the Efficient Service Delivery and Operations Principle that states that the County will strive to balance the diversity of needs countywide and support efforts to streamline regulatory processes and promote operational enhancements relevant to County departments' missions and core services; as well as the Inter-Agency Collaboration principle that states that the County will support the advocacy efforts of such organizations as the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and other local, regional and federal agencies/associations.

For these reasons, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors respectfully requests your signature on AB 361 (Rivas). If you have questions about the Board's position, please contact the County's Legislative Coordinator, Jasmine McGinty at 805-568-3108 or jmcginty@countyofsb.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cliff Berg
Governmental Advocates, Inc.

cc: The Honorable Assemblymember Robert Rivas, Author
Ronda Paschal, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
The Honorable Senator Monique Limon, 19th Senate District
The Honorable Assemblymember Steve Bennett, 37th Assembly District
The Honorable Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
Members, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Nancy Anderson, Assistant County Executive Officer, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors