March 1, 2023

The Honorable Gregg Hart (lenh.voong@asm.ca.gov)

California State Assembly

1021 O Street, Suite 6230

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 557 (Hart) – Support [As Introduced]**

Dear Assembly Member Hart:

The [COUNTY OF/ORGANIZATION NAME] is pleased to inform you of our support for Assembly Bill 557, related to emergency remote meeting procedures under the Ralph M. Brown Act.

The changes made to California Government Code section 54953 by Assembly Bill 361 (R. Rivas, 2021) were of vital importance to local agencies looking to meet during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue to conduct the people’s business. These changes were necessary in order to permit local agencies to meet during a time that it would have otherwise been impossible to meet in-person safely. Important safeguards were included to ensure transparency and accountability, including the fact that the emergency provisions were only applicable in instances where the California Governor had declared a state of emergency.

While California seeks to transition to a post-COVID era, the threat of additional emergencies remains, as has been made abundantly clear by recent flooding and wildfires. Absent any legislative intervention, the processes established by AB 361 to provide remote meeting flexibility to local agencies in emergency circumstances will expire at the end of this year. To remain best-equipped to address future emergencies and allow local agencies to effectively react and respond, AB 557 would eliminate the sunset on the emergency remote meeting procedures added to California Government Code section 54953. Additionally, AB 557 would adjust the timeframe for the resolutions passed to renew an agency’s temporary transition to emergency remote meetings to 45 days, up from the previous number of 30 days. [PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW THIS LEGISLATION IMPACTS YOUR COUNTY OR ORGANIZATION, IF APPLICABLE]

This legislation will preserve an effective tool for local agencies facing emergencies that would otherwise prevent them from conducting the people’s business when faced with an emergency. For these reasons, [COUNTY/ ORGANIZATION NAME] is pleased to support Assembly Bill 557. Please feel free to contact me at [SIGNATORY’S EMAIL] or at [SIGNATORY’S EMAIL ADDRESS] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[*Insert Signature Here*]

[SIGNATORY’S NAME]

[SIGNATORY’S TITLE/POSITION]

CC: Kalyn Dean, Legislative Advocate, California State Association of Counties (kdean@counties.org)

Marcus Detwiler, Legislative Representative, California Special Districts Association (advocacy@csda.net)