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July 21, 2023

Kimberlee Meyer
Chief, Central Office Workforce Services Division
Employment Development Department
722 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: CERF Catalyst Program Framework

Dear Chief Meyer,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in the state, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Community Economic Resilience Fund Program (CERF) Catalyst Program framework. The CERF program is an opportunity for the family of California counties, through participation in regional collaboratives, to establish a vision for an economic future that values high quality jobs, a robust economic future, and is inclusive of disinvested communities, while confronting our shared challenges to adapt to a changing climate.

Traditionally, smaller counties have struggled to compete with larger counties in applying for competitive grant programs, particularly for programs that value “shovel-ready” projects. The application process for grants can consume critical staff resources, causing some counties to rationally choose not to apply for resources that can help improve their communities. This leads to a self-perpetuating cycle, where better-resourced communities outcompete disinvested communities for precious resources. To truly meet the goals of the CERF Program, it is vital to upend this dynamic and allow the local communities that most need to diversify and modernize their economies to share in the vision the CERF Program is enacting.

We applaud the efforts of the Labor & Workforce Development Agency, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, and the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development to establish a framework for the CERF Catalyst Program that is inclusive of all local communities. By allowing for pre-development funds to flow to regions, the Catalyst Program will help counties make meaningful commitments to economic plans that will lift our local economies and workforces.

Through program refinements like the Catalyst Program that encourage participation by disinvested communities, the CERF Program can fulfill its mission to help all regional communities improve both climate and economic resilience as we emerge from the COVID-19

pandemic and confront an uncertain future. We look forward to continuing our engagement throughout the process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at elawyer@counties.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Eric Lawyer', written in a cursive style.

Eric Lawyer
Legislative Advocate
elawyer@counties.org
California State Association of Counties