



August 31, 2026

Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Senate Bill 973: Wildfire County Coordinator Program

Dear Governor Newsom;

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to sign SB 973: Wildfire County Coordinator Program (Becker & Stern), a bill that will meaningfully strengthen community wildfire resilience across California.

Wildfires continue to pose an escalating threat to life, property, public health, and the state's economy. Proven, proactive strategies—such as home hardening, defensible space, fuels reduction, evacuation planning, and community education—significantly reduce wildfire risk. However, many communities lack the technical and administrative capacity needed to plan, prioritize, and implement these solutions at scale.

SB 973 addresses this challenge by establishing a statewide framework that pairs standardized, state-led guidance for assessing wildfire risk and prioritizing the mitigations that matter with locally delivered implementation capacity. Importantly, the bill codifies and expands the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, a proven initiative delivered in partnership between CAL FIRE and the California Fire Safe Council since 2021.

Since 2021, the Wildfire County Coordinator Program has received funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, through a \$10.9M Wildfire Prevention grant, and from the General Fund, through a \$9.5M direct program appropriation. The County Coordinator Program is currently funded through the end of calendar year 2027 and will have minimal fiscal impact on the 2026-27 fiscal year.

State investment in community wildfire risk reduction will 'bend the curve' of urban conflagration risk and lower the costs of catastrophic wildfires. The recently released [SB 254](#) report presented the California Legislature with recommendations to address the statewide economic consequences of catastrophic wildfires. Under "Pathway 1 - Commit to Community Wildfire Risk Reduction", the SB 254 report recommends that the state "supports community mitigation planning and implementation through programs like CAL FIRE's Wildfire County Coordinator initiative, a partnership between CAL FIRE and the California Fire Safe Council to build local capacity for wildfire mitigation." (SB 254 report, pg 51).

The Wildfire County Coordinator Program has demonstrated measurable success by strengthening county-level coordination, securing over \$104 million for local mitigation projects, educating nearly 1 million residents in high-risk communities, establishing over 100 new Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities, and building durable partnerships across jurisdictions. The program provides flexibility to build this wildfire capacity at whichever host entity makes most sense in each county, be it the county government, countywide Fire Safe Council, local resource conservation district, or other local entity.

County-level coordination is essential to achieving community-scale wildfire resilience. Counties are uniquely positioned to enable action across city, special district, and land ownership boundaries while maintaining direct working relationships with local fire agencies, building officials, planners, public health departments, and residents. Through their County Coordinators,

counties can effectively translate statewide wildfire resilience goals into coordinated, on-the-ground action aligned with regional landscape resilience efforts. By placing this program into statute, SB 973 ensures stability, accountability, and long-term impact—while requiring no new appropriation to support this program this year beyond existing funding.

The bill also strengthens the effectiveness and consistency of mitigation investments by directing CAL FIRE to develop standardized wildfire risk assessment guidance and planning tools to support the work of the Wildfire County Coordinators and other similar efforts. This approach helps ensure limited public resources are targeted to the highest-risk areas and most impactful projects, while preserving flexibility for locally informed decision-making. By advancing proactive, science-informed planning and locally delivered implementation, SB 973 helps reduce the scale and severity of catastrophic wildfires—protecting natural resources, watersheds, wildlife habitat, and working lands while avoiding higher long-term costs associated with emergency response, ecosystem damage, and post-fire recovery.

SB 973 represents a practical, cost-effective approach to advancing California’s wildfire strategy through data-driven, locally implemented solutions. It strengthens public safety, supports community resilience and insurability, and improves returns on the state’s wildfire investments.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to sign SB 973.

Sincerely,

Jacy Hyde
Executive Director
California Fire Safe Council

Eric Horne
California Director
Megafire Action

On behalf of the undersigned organizations:

Steven Hawks, Senior Director for Wildfire,
on behalf of Insurance Institute for Business
& Home Safety

Brandon Ebeck, Government Relations
Manager, on behalf of Pacific Gas and
Electric (PG&E)

Chris Ochoa, Senior Counsel, on behalf of
California Building Industry Association

Paul Mason, Vice President, Policy &
Incentives, on behalf of Pacific Forest Trust

Jordan Wells, Legislative Advocate, on behalf
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Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate, on
behalf of Rural County Representatives of
California

Nuin-Tara Key, COO, on behalf of California
Forward

Chris Anthony, Founder & CEO, on behalf of
FireWERX

Victor Joseph, President and Chief Operating
Officer, on behalf of Mercury Insurance

Ryan Sears, Policy and Advocacy Lead, on behalf of Neighborhood Partnership Housing Services, Inc.

Molly Mowery, Executive Director, on behalf of Community Wildfire Planning Center

Ben Stapleton, CEO, on behalf of USGBC California

Elisia De Board, Governmental Relations and Legislative Officer, on behalf of Sacramento County Board of Supervisors

Lisa Swarthout, Chair, on behalf of Nevada County Board of Supervisors

Jimmy Paulding, Chair of the Board, on behalf of the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

Cathy Cockrum Dean, President and Founder, on behalf of Elevate California

Sam Uden, Co-Founder and Managing Director, on behalf of Net-Zero California

Ryan Reed, Program Director, FireGeneration Collaborative

Seth Schalet, CEO, on behalf of Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

Nancy Armstrong-Frost, Board President, on behalf of Mendocino County Fire Safe Council

Aaron Babcock, County Coordinator, on behalf of Del Norte Fire Safe Council

Bill Tyler, Executive Director, on behalf of Fire Safe Marin

J. Lopez, Executive Director CWMPA

Michael J. Gollner, Ph.D.

Barbara Holder, Board Chairman, on behalf of Shasta County Fire Safe Council

Kate Furlong, Community Resilience Lead, on behalf of Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council

Yvonne E Vaucher, MD, MPH, President, on behalf of Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council Foundation

Ali Freedlund, Program Director, on behalf of Mattole Restoration Council

Jason M. McBroom, Program Facilitator, on behalf of Alpine Viejas Fire Safe Council

Diane Ahern, President, on behalf of University City Fire Safe Council

Will Castagna, Board Chair, on behalf of Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council

Lanie Somers-Standifer, President, on behalf of 40 Acres Fire Safe Council

Frances Belden, Board of Directors, on behalf of Shasta County Fire Safe Council

Giselle Nova, Coordinator, on behalf of Fire Safe Council of Siskiyou County

Derek Reeves, Chairman, on behalf of Del Mar Mesa Fire Safe Council

Stacey Hafen, Executive Director, on behalf of Modoc Fire Safe Council

Barbara Cone, Executive Director, on behalf of Mariposa Fire Safe Council

Stephen Watson, Executive Director, on behalf of Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council

Denise Rolen, CEO, on behalf of Escondido Fire Safe Council

Ion Cheptene, Chairman, on behalf of Via Crest Fire Safe Council of San Diego County

Cade Mohler, Managing Director, on behalf of Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc.

Roberta MacIntyre, Board Member, on behalf of Fire Safe Sonoma

Taylor Nilsson, Executive Director, on behalf
of Butte County Fire Safe Council

Kathy Weber, Education and Outreach
Coordinator, on behalf of Southern Humboldt
Fire Safe Council

Trudie Mahoney, Executive Board Chair, on
behalf of Kern Fire Safe Council

David Barrett, Executive Director, on behalf of
Safe Community Project

John Neumeister, President, on behalf of
Eucalyptus Hills Landowner's Association

Morgan Dioli, Wildfire Resilience Program
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Michael O'Connell, President & Chief
Executive Officer, on behalf of Irvine Ranch
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Steve Frisch, President, on behalf of Sierra
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Joelle Fraser, Interim Executive Director, on
behalf of Diablo Firesafe Council Executive
Committee

Liz Harper-Price, Executive Director, on
behalf of Colusa County Resource
Conservation District

Jon Barrett, District Manager, on behalf of
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County

Kayla Crough, PhD, Deputy Director, on
behalf of Trinity County Resource
Conservation District

Heather Nichols, Executive Director, on
behalf of Yolo County Resource Conservation
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