

# County of Monterey



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April 10, 2023

The Honorable Blanca Pacheco  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Room 6240  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 817 (Pacheco) Local Government: open meetings. – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Pacheco:

The County of Monterey is pleased to support for your measure Assembly Bill (AB) 817. This measure will remove barriers to entry for appointed and elected office by allowing non-decision-making legislative bodies that do not have the ability to take final action to participate in two-way virtual teleconferencing without posting location.

Challenges associated with recruitment have been attributed to participation time commitments; time and location of meetings; physical limitation, conflicts with childcare, and work obligations. The COVID-19 global pandemic drove both hyper-awareness and concerns about the spread of infectious diseases, as well as removed barriers to local civic participation by allowing this same remote participation. This enabled individuals who could not otherwise accommodate the time, distance, or mandatory physical participation requirements to engage locally, providing access to leadership opportunities and providing communities with greater diversified input on critical community proposals.

Existing law (Stats. 1991, Ch. 669) requires local bodies to publish and publicly notice opportunities that exist to participate in and serve on local regulatory and advisory boards, commissions, and committees under the Local Appointments List, known as the Maddy Act. However, merely informing the public of the opportunity to engage is not enough: addressing barriers to entry to achieve diverse representation in leadership furthers the Legislature's declared goals of equal access and equal opportunity.

Diversification in civic participation at all levels requires careful consideration of different protected characteristics as well as socio-economic status. The in-person requirement to participate in local governance bodies presents a disproportionate challenge for those with physical or economic limitations. Participation in local advisory bodies and appointed boards and commissions often serves as a pipeline to local elected office and opportunities for state and federal leadership positions.

AB 817 would help address these issues by providing a narrow exemption under the Ralph M. Brown Act for non-decision-making legislative bodies that do not take final action on any legislation, regulations, contracts, licenses, permits, or other entitlements, so that equity in opportunity to serve locally and representative diversity in leadership can be achieved.

For these reasons the County of Monterey supports AB 817. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis A. Alejo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Luis A. Alejo, Chair  
Board of Supervisors

Cc: The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14<sup>th</sup> Senate District  
The Honorable John Laird, 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District  
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Honorable Members, Assembly Local Government Committee  
Ronda Paschal, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Governor's Office of Legislative Affairs  
Angela Mapp, Chief Consultant, Assembly Local Government Committee  
William Weber, Assembly Republican Consultant  
Kalyn Dean, Legislative Advocate, California State Association of Counties (CSAC)  
Sarah Dukett, Policy Advocate, Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)