

TO: The Honorable Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nossaman LLP on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors

DATE: June 23, 2023

RE: **AB 557 (Hart) Open meetings: local agencies: teleconferences. – SUPPORT**

The County of Monterey is pleased to support measure Assembly Bill (AB) 557 by Assembly Member Gregg Hart, related to emergency remote meeting procedures under the Ralph M. Brown Act.

The changes made to California Government Code section 54953 by AB 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.

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, the County of Monterey is pleased to support AB 557. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey’s Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,



Ashley Walker
Nossaman LLP

CC: Honorable Gregg Hart, California State Senate
Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
Consultant, Senate Judiciary Committee
Morgan Branch, Senate Republican Consultant

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Hon. Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
Hon. John Laird, 17th Senate District
Hon. Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)