

County of Monterey



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September 19, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
1020 N Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Re: AB 557 (Hart) Open meetings: local agencies: teleconferences. – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

The County of Monterey requests your signature on 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 to continue to conduct the people's business. These changes were necessary 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 and respectfully asks for your signature. 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,

LUIS A. ALEJO
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Cc: The Honorable Assemblymember Gregg Hart, Author
Hazel Miranda, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties
Rural Counties Representatives of California