



NOSSAMAN LLP | Memorandum

TO: The Honorable Tom Umberg, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

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

DATE: May 17, 2024

RE: **AB 817 (Pacheco) Open meetings: teleconferencing: subsidiary body.
SUPPORT**

The County of Monterey is pleased to support Assembly Bill (AB) 817 (Pacheco), which would 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 their location.

Local governments across the state have faced an ongoing challenge to recruit and retain members of the public on advisory bodies, boards, and commissions. Challenges associated with recruitment have been attributed to participation time commitments; time and location of meetings; physical limitation, conflicts with childcare, and work obligations.

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, including seniors, persons with disability, single parents and/or caretakers, economically marginalized groups, and those who live in rural areas and face prohibitive driving distances. 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, we are pleased to support AB 817 and reiterate our appreciation for your leadership on this most important issue.

For these reasons, the County of Monterey pleased to support 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,

Ashley Walker
Nossaman LLP

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CC: Honorable Blanca Pacheco, California State Assembly
Members and Consultants, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hon. Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
Hon. Anna Caballero, 14th Senate 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)