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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

March 13, 2017

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Conyers:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in support of Congressman Cook's H.R. 1138, the Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2017.

The use of drones continues to expand nationwide, but laws and regulations governing their usage have not kept pace with the technology. There have been several incidences in Southern California during which unregulated drone use has forced aerial firefighting operations over uncontrolled wild fires to be suspended due to the threat that the drone posed to low-flying planes and helicopters. This in turn heightened the risk to firefighters on the ground, as well as the threat to homes and other structures in the area.

H.R. 1138 would provide a criminal penalty for launching drones that interfere with fighting wildfires affecting Federal property, including National Forest and BLM lands in the County. Firefighters and other first responders who use drones would be exempted. Please work with your colleagues on the committee to take action on the Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2017 or similar legislation to address this threat to public safety. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas P. Walters
Washington Representative

TPW:awg