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**BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS**

County Administration
Building

105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Telephone: (805) 568-2190

www.countyofsb.org

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 8, 2018

The Honorable Ricardo Lara
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Senate, State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1088 (Dodd) Utility Resiliency Planning – Support

Dear Senator Ricardo Lara:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to state our support for SB 1088 (Dodd) as amended on May 2nd. This bill would require the Office of Emergency Services, along with other agencies, to establish standards for utilities to protect against damage from storms, floods, mudslides, wildfires, earthquakes. In addition, the bill would require Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs) to file, and the California Public Utilities Commission to review, adopt and enforce, safety, reliability and resiliency plans to prevent and mitigate risk from wildfires and other major events that affect the safety and reliability of the electric and gas systems.

Given the devastation of the Thomas Fire in December 2017 and increasingly dangerous conditions in California with prolonged drought conditions and rising tree mortality rates, we must start taking steps to address this new normal.

While we do believe this process would help to make California’s utility infrastructure more resilient, we shared CSAC’s concern with the bill’s potential impact on civil liability issues potentially outside the scope of this bill. Section 2899.6 stated that “after completing the review pursuant to Section 2899.4, if the commission determines that a utility was in substantial compliance with its plan, the utility’s performance, operations, management, and investments addressed in the plan shall be deemed reasonable and prudent for all purposes.” We believe the term “for all purposes” was vague and opened the door to other liability issues outside of the scope of SB 1088. Recently, CSAC and other advocates agreed to an amendment with the author that will provide clarity and limit the reach of this measure to exclude any potential impact on a civil proceeding.

As California works to become more resilient and adapt to our changing environment, it is more critical than ever to adequately address potential risks across all sectors. It is for these reasons that we have a support position on SB 1088 (Dodd).

If you have questions about the Board’s position, please contact the County’s Legislative Coordinator, Dennis Bozanich at 805-568-3403 or dbozanich@countyofsb.org.

Sincerely,

Cliff Berg, Legislative Advocate

cc:

The Honorable Senator Bill Dodd, Author
Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Narisha Bonakdar, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee
Kerry Yoshida, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, 13th Senate District
Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
Assemblymember Monique Limon, 37th Assembly District
Dennis Bozanich, Legislative Coordinator, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisor