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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 15, 2020

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
SH-112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harris:

I am writing on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara in support of S. 4431, the *Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act*.

The County appreciates your support for making wildfire protection a higher priority and enacting reforms to make our communities safer from this danger. California has experienced record-breaking fire seasons in recent years and this trend has directly impacted Santa Barbara County. The 2017 Thomas Fire, and the January 9, 2018, debris flow that resulted, devastated Montecito and other areas of the County, serving as a stark example of the direct and indirect costs of wildfires.

S. 4431 will provide additional funding and policy authorizations to help reduce these dangers. Climate change is increasing the fire risk caused by extreme heat waves and these trends are forecasted to continue. In the face of this challenge, S. 4431 would provide additional resources to create more resilient communities and energy grids. The bill would allow FEMA hazard mitigation funding to be used for the installation of fire-resistant wires and infrastructure and for the undergrounding of wires. It would also expedite the installation of fuel breaks near existing roads, trails, transmission lines and pipelines.

The County urges expeditious consideration of S. 4431 to reduce these threats to life and safety, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, and significant and environmental and health impacts.

Sincerely yours,

Don Gilchrest
Washington Representative

DWG: awg