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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Telephone: (805) 568-2190
www.countyofsb.org

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro "Alex" Padilla
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Padilla:

I am writing on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara to urge your continued support for the local government assistance for pandemic relief that is contained in President Biden's proposed *American Rescue Plan*.

Thank you for your support for the critical actions needed to address the significant health, safety and economic impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress continues the process of drafting pandemic relief legislation over the next few weeks, the County requests your continued support for immediate passage of \$350 billion in state and local government aid. In addition, the County supports emergency funding for public health operations such as testing and vaccine distribution, housing and homeless assistance, and nutrition and social services programs.

As a result of the pandemic, the County has increased spending to provide crucial public health services, emergency costs and help communities adapt to State COVID-19 Guidelines. At the same time, severe revenue shortfalls have resulted due to declines in sales and other taxes and fees, including declines in taxes and fees on hotels, tolls, and motor fuel.

In California, counties are mandated to be the safety-net for our communities, including cities, all while managing the emergency operations center activity and continuing to provide law enforcement, detention facilities and coroner services, judicial services through the District Attorney and Public Defender, veterans' services, behavioral and public health services, social services, including sheltering of the homeless population, foster care, adoption assistance and general relief, among many other essential county functions. Given this role at the front lines of this crisis, please work to allocate resources directly to counties.

The County also supports language to provide parity between private and public employers by extending COVID-19 payroll tax credits to local governments. The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* created a payroll tax credit for employers to offset the costs of providing expanded

paid sick and family medical leave to employees due to COVID-19. However, the Act only allows private employers to receive the payroll tax credit.

Finally, financial assistance to businesses and individuals continues to be important. Public health measures to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus have significantly harmed small businesses and workers. Programs like enhanced federal unemployment benefits, small business assistance, stimulus payments to individuals, and FEMA disaster response programs will continue to be needed to mitigate the intense economic dislocation that we are experiencing.

Thank you again for your leadership and support during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Gilchrest". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Don Gilchrest
Washington Representative

DWG: awg