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**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA****BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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January 27, 2021

Senator Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094

Assemblymember Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026

RE: Support for State Funding for Coroner Training & Equipment

Dear Chairs Mitchell and Ting:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to respectfully request your support for a state budget allocation of \$1 million for training and equipment needed to support the work of county coroners, who are responsible for responding to emergency situations during mass fatalities, including fires, shootings, natural disasters, pandemics, and more.

Law enforcement and fire personnel routinely train for how to respond to a mass casualty event, but when it comes to mass fatality scenarios, training opportunities for the coroner team are virtually non-existent. Coroner personnel are periodically invited to participate in scenarios with law enforcement and fire agencies, but the training is stopped when it is determined that the live casualties are appropriately addressed. This leaves coroner personnel unprepared for mass fatality events, and ultimately, these agencies are responsible for their own in-house training. Funding for statewide or regional training would greatly improve the ability of coroner personnel to respond to these tragic events.

Expanding the use of the rapid DNA equipment would also allow coroners to better serve the public. Many small to medium sized counties do not have the resources necessary to respond to mass fatality events using this equipment. During the Camp Fire in Paradise, CA and the Conception Fire in Santa Barbara, CA, the majority of victim identifications were made using rapid DNA technology, and the supplies needed to run these tests were donated by the rapid DNA company for victim identification. We cannot rely on receiving donations in the future. Only a handful of counties have rapid DNA equipment, and other agencies would benefit from use of this technology. State funding for the equipment would provide victim's families with faster and more efficient identification.

The Board of Supervisors adopted a 2021 Legislative Platform that includes the Fiscal Stability Principle, which states that the County will support efforts to generate new intergovernmental revenue and enhance existing revenue/reimbursement levels, as well as the Efficient Services Delivery and Operations principle, which states specifically that the County will support efforts to streamline regulatory processes and promote operational enhancements relevant to County departments' missions and core services, including disaster prevention & response.

There is a great need for financial support and statewide training for coroner agencies in California, which will allow these agencies to be better equipped to respond to mass fatality events and provide victim's families with more timely and efficient responses. As such, I am requesting your support for a \$1 million state budget allocation to fund a training program for coroner agencies and to expand the use of rapid DNA technology. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



Cliff Berg

Governmental Advocates, Inc.

cc: The Honorable Senator Monique Limon, 19th Senate District
The Honorable Assemblymember Steve Bennett, 37th Assembly District
The Honorable Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
Members, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Nancy Anderson, Legislative Coordinator, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors