



May 31, 2024

The Honorable Blanca Pacheco
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 6240
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 817 – Open meetings: teleconferencing: subsidiary body – Support
(As Amended May 29, 2024)**

Dear Assemblymember Pacheco:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill (AB) 817, which would remove barriers to entry in civic participation by aligning provisions for local advisory bodies with state advisory bodies, allowing these non-decision-making sub-bodies of a legislative governing body to participate remotely via two-way virtual teleconferencing without posting of their location.

NATALIE ROGERS
Mayor

MARK STAPP
Vice Mayor

EDDIE ALVAREZ
VICTORIA FLEMING
DIANNA MACDONALD
JEFF OKREPKIE
CHRIS ROGERS

The in-person requirement to participate in local governance bodies presents a disproportionate challenge for those with physical or economic limitations, including seniors, persons with disability, single parents and/or caretakers, economically marginalized groups, and those who live in rural areas and face prohibitive driving distances. During the COVID-19 pandemic individuals who could not otherwise accommodate the time, distance, or mandatory physical participation requirements to engage locally were able to participate remotely, accessing leadership opportunities and providing communities with greater diversified input on critical community proposals.

Last year, the Legislature overwhelmingly passed, and the Governor signed SB 544 (Stats. 202, Ch. 216). Noting equity issues presented by physical attendance requirements, this bill provided teleconferencing flexibility to members of state advisory only bodies. AB 817 would remove these same barriers to leadership opportunities by providing the same narrow exemption for non-decision-making legislative bodies that do not take final action so that equity in opportunity to serve locally and representative diversity in leadership can be achieved.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 817. Should you have any questions, please contact our legislative advocate Dane Hutchings with Renne Public Policy Group at 916-974-9270.

Sincerely,

Natalie Rogers, Mayor