



June 8, 2023

The Honorable Gregg Hart
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 6230
Sacramento, CA 95814-0007

RE: Assembly Bill 557 – Open meetings: local agencies: teleconferences – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Hart:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I write to express our support for Assembly Bill (AB) 557, which would provide a narrow but important emergency authority in perpetuity to allow local governing bodies to safely meet and take action during applicable states of emergency by eliminating the January 1, 2024 sunset on these provisions of the Brown Act.

NATALIE ROGERS
Mayor

DIANNA MACDONALD
Vice Mayor

EDDIE ALVAREZ
VICTORIA FLEMING
JEFF OKREPKIE
CHRIS ROGERS
MARK STAPP

AB 557 would preserve an effective tool for local agencies facing emergencies that would otherwise prevent them from conducting the people's business. The changes made to California Government Code section 54953 by Assembly Bill 361 (R. Rivas, 2021) were of vital importance to local agencies looking to meet during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to conduct the people's business. These changes were necessary to permit local agencies to meet during a time that it would have otherwise been impossible to meet in-person safely. Important safeguards were included to ensure transparency and accountability, including the fact that the emergency provisions were only applicable in instances where the California Governor had declared a state of emergency.

While California transitions to a post-COVID era, these provisions have been employed to ensure essential business is able to continue during natural disasters such as during recent flooding and wildfire events. Absent legislative intervention, the processes established by AB 361 to provide remote meeting flexibility to local agencies in emergency circumstances will expire at the end of this year. To remain best equipped to address future emergencies and allow local agencies to effectively react and respond, eliminating the sunset on the emergency remote meeting procedures is necessary. AB 557 would do exactly this.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 557 and thank you for your leadership on this most important issue. 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

CC: The Honorable Thomas Umberg, Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Scott Wilk, Vice Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Mike McGuire, Senate District 2
The Honorable Damon Connolly, Assembly District 12
The Honorable Jim Wood, Assembly District 2
Ronda Paschal, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs

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