

March 3, 2026

Senator Josh Becker
1021 O Street, Suite 6520
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT – SB 973 (Becker): Wildfire County Coordinator Program

Dear Sen. Becker,

On behalf of the County of Monterey, I write in support of SB 973 (Becker), which codifies and expands California's wildfire resilience infrastructure by requiring CAL FIRE to establish wildfire risk modeling standards, develop county-level risk assessment tools and resilience plans, and formally authorize the Wildfire County Coordinator Program through an agreement with the California Fire Safe Council to coordinate local mitigation, prevention, preparedness, and recovery efforts statewide.

SB 973 addresses a core challenge communities face: while proven strategies like home hardening, defensible space, fuels reduction, evacuation planning, and community education reduce wildfire risk, many communities lack the capacity to assess risk, prioritize projects, and implement solutions at scale. The bill responds by pairing standardized, state-led wildfire risk assessment guidance with locally delivered implementation capacity—ensuring state wildfire strategy consistently translates into on-the-ground action.

A key piece of this bill is the codification and expansion of the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, a proven program delivered by the California Fire Safe Council in partnership with CAL FIRE since 2021. County Coordinators help align local, state, federal, Tribal, and community partners; advance prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery projects; and ensure limited resources are directed to the highest-risk areas.

The Program has demonstrated strong results, including securing more than \$104 million for local mitigation projects, reaching nearly one million residents with wildfire resilience education, supporting the formation of over 100 Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities, and building durable cross-jurisdictional partnerships. Its flexible design allows capacity to be housed with the entity best suited to local conditions—whether county government, a Fire Safe Council, a resource conservation district, or another trusted local organization. Importantly, the Program is already funded through 2027, and SB 973 requires no new appropriation this year.

By placing this program into statute, SB 973 ensures long-term stability, accountability, and consistency for the program, while improving coordination through standardized risk assessment and planning tools. The result is a more cohesive, cost-effective statewide

system that strengthens public safety, community resilience, and the return on California's wildfire investments.

For these reasons, the County of Monterey support SB 973 which ensures that California's wildfire resilience investments are coordinated, and advance prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. Should you have any questions, please contact Senior Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker at 916-930-7780.

Sincerely,

Wendy Root Askew
Chair
County of Monterey Board of Supervisors