



TRANSMITTED ELECTRONICALLY

April 24, 2022

Assemblymember Alex Lee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA

Re: AB 1944 (Lee) Local government: open and public meetings. Support

Dear Assemblymember Lee,

The California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) is pleased to inform you that we support AB 1944. Our membership consists of regional entities across the state. As such, our member jurisdictions cover larger areas that make attendance more difficult and time consuming for members of the public and the local officials that serve on the boards.

We are pleased to support the update to the Brown Act proposed in AB 1944 for the following reasons:

- **Virtual Teleconferencing Standardized.** The Brown Act permits local agencies to incorporate teleconferenced communications within a public meeting. This bill would assure that all teleconference would require that in include video streaming that was available to the public and the opportunity for the public to participate remotely. These practices are in accord with standard practice during the pandemic.
- **Teleconferencing Provides Greater Transparency for Regional Agencies.** Since regional agencies cover multiple jurisdictions, its often harder for residents to travel to see and participate in these meetings in person. Teleconferencing has allowed more people, and particularly people who have jobs or child care commitments—to be able to track and participate in meetings. (We acknowledge that such access is dependent on broadband access that not everyone enjoys. But barriers of requiring in-person often causes more time away from jobs and travel costs that pose similar barriers).
- **Remote Participation by Public Officials.** This bill would also provide local officials the opportunity to participate in a teleconference from a private location. Posting specific addresses and making them available to the public often present real security issues (and costs). But such participation also allows local officials to better balance



their already complicated schedules, particularly for those who serve on regional boards and other joint boards.

- **The Not-So-Uncommon Case of Cheryl Viegas Walker.** Ms Walker is an exceptional public servant (she is also CALCOG's immediate past president). She is the City Council Member of El Centro in Imperial County. She also serves on the Imperial County Transportation Commission and the Southern California Association of Governments (where she has also served as Regional Council president). The SCAG board meets monthly, which requires her to drive 4 hours one way or to take commuter flights from the local airport to LAX and then take ground transport to downtown Los Angeles. She often has to come in the night before (or be caught in traffic) – so her participation at SCAG meetings is often a 24-hour commitment over two days. Knowing Ms. Walker, we know that she prefers attending in-person. But often, the multiple demands of her city, county, and regional roles (in addition to job and family commitments) overlap. Not only would a teleconference option afford Ms. Walker more flexibility in discharging her duties as a SCAG board member, it would also make it easier to attend subcommittees and other ad hoc meetings relating to her other city and county duties when she is traveling.

Thank you for introducing AB 1944 to address this very important issue. We are pleased to support. Please contact me (bhiggins@calcog.org or (916) 717-8324) if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance. Sincerely,



Bill Higgins
Executive Director