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April 24, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 3150 (Quirk-Silva), Review and Redesignation of Fire Hazard Severity Zones – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Wicks,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for AB 3150 (Quirk-Silva), which would update and streamline critical information processes and allow more public input into the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) map designations.

Throughout California's history the state has contended with destructive wildfires. Over the last decade, a string of unprecedented wildfire events culminated with the deadliest wildfire in California's history. The impacts of these wildfires cannot be understated, many lives were lost, thousands of homes were destroyed, and residents, in some cases entire communities, have been forced to relocate. Billions of dollars in damage were caused to homes, businesses, and infrastructure throughout the state.

The confluence of relentless drought, urbanization, and constraints on forest management has resulted in an urgent need for enhanced strategies and action to address this threat. The Legislature has made substantial investments to continue strengthening forest and wildfire resilience statewide in an effort to mitigate the ongoing impact of critically dry fuel conditions and longer, more severe fire seasons, and we applaud and appreciate those efforts.

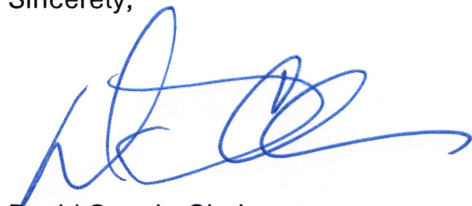
From a historical mitigation context, Government Code Section 51178 requires the State Fire Marshal to identify, map, and categorize State Responsibility Areas (SRA) as moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity zones based on statewide criteria and the severity of fire hazard expected to prevail in those regions. The most recent update of the FHSZ maps represented a dramatic shift of acreage into high and very high fire hazard severity classifications, impacting property values and the affordability and availability of property insurance in these communities. Properties located within these newly categorized high and very high hazard zones are now subject to the strictest building codes, Fire Safe regulations, and defensible space requirements. The accuracy of these maps is of paramount importance to aid residents with identifying the best fire mitigation actions and to help with the state's current property insurance crisis.

AB 3150 would bring balance back to the decision-making process by requiring the State Fire Marshal to provide enhanced opportunities for the public to review and comment on the FHSZ maps and by offering opportunities for property owners to petition a review and potential redesignation for areas greater than 50 acres. If applicants can show an area has undergone a significant change in conditions such as home hardening and maintenance of defensible space, these efforts could lead to a reduction in severity designation from very high to high or moderate. This legislation provides a critical measure to strengthen the accuracy of California's FHSZ maps and allows the State Fire Marshal to consider map revisions through a petition process that is similar to the longstanding process used for flood map revisions.

Millions of Californians, businesses, homeowners, tenants, and landlords are affected by California's FHSZ map designations. Outdated and inaccurate map designations can adversely impact the availability and affordability of insurance and the cost of providing housing for all Californians. This legislation will provide property owners with an opportunity to learn what mitigation measures, if implemented, will best reduce wildfire risk on their parcels and in their communities. This, in turn, encourages proactive mitigation efforts, such as vegetation management and home hardening, to enhance overall community resilience and reduce the risk of catastrophic loss during fire events.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors strongly supports this legislation and respectfully requests that you vote **YES on AB 3150**.

Sincerely,



David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Fire Department
Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange