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June 24, 2025

The Honorable Isaac Bryan
Chair, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 581 (McGuire), CAL FIRE permanent firefighter classification – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Bryan,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for SB 581 (McGuire), which would require the Department of Human Resources, the State Personnel Board, and other relevant state agencies to take the necessary actions to transition the Firefighter I classification within the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to a permanent firefighter employment classification.

California and the Western United States are experiencing unprecedented wildfire destruction. Over the past five years, eight of the most devastating wildfires in the state's history have occurred, including two of the deadliest that destroyed more than 16,000 structures in Los Angeles County just two weeks after Christmas. Despite significant state investments that have doubled CAL FIRE's workforce over the past eight years, additional strategic support is crucial.

The state now faces an escalating wildfire crisis, defined by fires that burn longer, hotter, faster, and more frequently than ever before. This new reality has fundamentally changed the firefighting landscape, stretching emergency resources to their limits and increasing the risks for both firefighters and the communities they serve. California cannot simply suppress or insure its way out of this crisis.

SB 581 offers a proactive and strategic approach. By transitioning CAL FIRE's Firefighter I classification to permanent status, the state can better leverage this trained and experienced workforce to not only respond to wildfires, but also carry out critical, year-round prevention work that is needed to protect vulnerable communities and reduce long-term wildfire risk. Strengthening this workforce will also help stabilize the broader insurance market by directly addressing the underlying threats that drive fire-related losses.

Kern County has experienced firsthand the devastating impact of wildfires, particularly in our rural and mountainous communities. A professional, permanent CAL FIRE workforce will enhance the

state's capacity to respond effectively, reduce turnover, and ensure long-term readiness. This bill is a practical, forward-thinking step toward building a more resilient California.

For these reasons, we commend the author's leadership on this issue and respectfully urge you to vote **YES on SB 581**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LP' or similar, with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

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