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June 16, 2023

The Honorable Brian Maienschein
Chair, Assembly Judiciary Committee
1020 N Street, Room 104
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: SB 16 (Smallwood-Cuevas) – SUPPORT
As Amended May 18, 2023**

Dear Assemblymember Maienschein:


On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in the state, I write in support of Senate Bill 16 (Smallwood-Cuevas), which would, commencing January 1, 2025, specify that local enforcement agencies may enforce prohibitions against discrimination in employment and housing.

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) prohibits discrimination in housing and employment on specified bases and provides procedures for enforcement by the Civil Rights Department. FEHA is the principal California statute prohibiting discrimination in employment. It prohibits employment discrimination based on race or color; religion; national origin or ancestry, physical disability; mental disability or medical condition; marital status; sex or sexual orientation; age; and pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. Any form of discrimination robs people of their human dignity and in some circumstances, can also rob them of their health and financial stability. When discrimination continues unchecked, it also robs our communities of valuable opportunities to be better and stronger.

While the Department of Fair Employment and Housing is dedicated to enforcing the FEHA throughout the state, the pervasiveness of discrimination throughout the state makes it difficult for a single state agency to bear the sole responsibility for enforcement. While municipalities and other local agencies could assist in the Act's enforcement, there is no clear direction on whether local agencies actually have the authority to do so. SB 16 would specify that nothing in the FEHA restricts the ability of local agencies from enforcing the Act's provisions. This will expand the number of agencies actively addressing the problem of workplace and housing discrimination and will help ensure equity for all Californians.

For the aforementioned reasons, we support SB 16 and urge the Committee to move forward on this important issue. Should you have any questions, please contact me at kdean@counties.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kalyn Dean".

Kalyn M. Dean
Legislative Advocate

cc: The Honorable Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, California Senate District 28
Members and Committee Staff, Assembly Judiciary Committee
Daryl Thomas, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus