



March 14, 2023

The Honorable Chris R. Holden
Chair, California Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 N Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 78 (Ward): Grand Juries - as of 12/15/22 - Oppose Unless Amended

Dear Assemblymember Holden,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Urban Counties of California (UCC), and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), must respectfully oppose Assembly Bill 78 (Ward), unless it is amended to fully address the considerable costs it would impose on county governments.

This county coalition's opposition to AB 78 relates exclusively to the changes in Section 890 of the Penal Code, which would increase the per diem rate paid to civil and criminal grand juries from the current statutorily required \$15 per day to an amount "equal to seventy percent of the county median daily income." While we appreciate and understand the desire to encourage increased diversity on grand juries, we are opposed to AB 78 because it lacks a mechanism to cover our low-end estimate of \$17.6 million in new and unanticipated county general fund costs. Costs could be considerably higher given that (1) our estimate reflects a conservative projection of the number of meetings per county; (2) it assumes the bill language does not expand the number of days the stipend applies to and (3) it assumes that the number of grand jury meetings will remain static. Further, our estimate is based on information reported by counties on civil grand juries only, although the bill would also apply to criminal grand juries.

While the state is experiencing a revenue shortfall after gains that have exceeded expectations and historical precedent year after year, in most counties, per capita revenues have never recovered from the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009, in real dollars. We therefore request that the provision in Section 2 of the bill providing for increased compensation apply only in years the state budget has provided a sufficient appropriation for the purpose. Doing so would provide county governments with the fiscal resources to meet their obligations under this measure.

For the reasons stated above, CSAC, UCC, and RCRC regretfully oppose AB 78 unless it is amended to provide funding for the increased costs imposed on counties. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions about our position.

The Honorable Chris. R. Holden

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Respectfully,



Kalyn Dean

Legislative Advocate

kdean@counties.org

CSAC



Elizabeth Espinosa

Legislative Advocate

ehe@hbeadvocacy.com

UCC



Sarah Dukett

Policy Advocate

sdukett@rcrcnet.org

RCRC

Cc: Charles Loudon, Legislative Assistant, Office of Assemblymember Christopher M. Ward:
Charles.Loudon@asm.ca.gov

Members and Staff, Assembly Appropriations Committee