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March 13, 2023

The Honorable Ash Kalra
Chair, Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment
1020 N Street, Room 155
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 735 (Berman) Workforce development: utility careers
As Introduced February 13, 2023 - SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Kalra:

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in the state, is pleased to support AB 735, which would create a High Road Utility Careers program at the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) to address the workforce needs of electric, gas, water, wastewater, and telecommunication industries. This bill will create the much-needed pipeline to guide prospective workers to obtain the training and skillsets necessary for employment.

Like many employers, California counties are facing significant workforce challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With California's unemployment rate near record lows and the Employment Development Department recently announcing that employers added almost 100,000 additional jobs in January (with Government employment adding over 46,000), counties have been competing with the public and private sector for a diminishing number of qualified employees.¹ Reports of counties experiencing 20 to 30 percent vacancy rates are common. While there are many factors that impact a reliable workforce, having a long-term, statewide program as envisioned by AB 735 will connect existing resources with individuals interested in careers in the utility sector, thereby ensuring a continued reliable workforce in California.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 735 and respectfully urge your support. If you have any questions about our position, please do not hesitate to contact me at kdean@counties.org.

Sincerely,

Kalyn M. Dean
Legislative Advocate

¹ [California Employment Development Department](#) (March 10, 2023).

Cc: Isabelle LaSalle , Senior Legislative Assistant, Office of Assemblymember Berman:
Isabelle.LaSalle@asm.ca.gov

Members and Staff, Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment