



April 10, 2024

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

**RE: Assembly Bill 2344 (Petrie-Norris) – SUPPORT
As Introduced February 12, 2024**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support Assembly Bill 2344, authored by Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris. This measure would provide state policymakers, local communities, and other essential stakeholders with comprehensive data and information on state and federal investments into wildfire and forest resilience programs. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

California has invested significant time and resources developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to wildfire related disaster preparedness, mitigation, and resilience through the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (Action Plan). Action Plan implementation requires coordination amongst federal and state agencies and departments, the State Legislature, hundreds of stakeholders, and communities across California. It also requires significant fiscal resources to: undertake projects to improve forest health and resilience; create fuel breaks; harden homes and communities; and build resilient lifeline infrastructure to withstand wildfire disasters when they do occur. Since FY 2020-21, the State has appropriated approximately \$2.8 billion for programs to support the State's wildfire and forest resilience goals and objectives.

While wildfire and forest resilience projects have been and continue to be awarded to communities throughout the state, the data is reported piecemeal across various state agencies, departments, boards, and offices. Further, the reporting is not adequate to understand that status of projects and programs nor how the investments are making a

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collective difference in communities. Understanding the status of current programs is vital information to target and maximize additional investments in fire prone areas. As the state faces a multibillion-dollar budget deficit, ensuring limited resources are maximized is even more critical.

AB 2344 would require the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force to provide comprehensive information to the public regarding how funds have been allocated from the state's most prolific fire prevention grant programs. In doing so, the public will be better able to understand the status of current programs and track how the state's dollars are being invested. It will also allow California's decision makers to obtain better information so that the state's investments can be maximized in the most fire prone areas.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports AB 2344 and urges your "aye" vote when this measure is heard before your committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", written in a cursive style.

STACI HEATON
Senior Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Nikita Koraddi, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Joe Shinstock, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus