



September 13, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 N Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1020 (Grayson) County Employees Retirement Law of 1937: disability retirement: medical conditions: employment-related presumption – Request for VETO (As enrolled September 11, 2023)

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Urban Counties of California (UCC), and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we write to respectfully request that you veto AB 1020 (Grayson), which would change the County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 by expanding the scope of medical conditions and employment-related presumptions for a disability retirement for firefighters, members in active law enforcement, and public safety members who have completed five years or more of service and that arise out of and in the course of employment.

We recognize that firefighters, members in active law enforcement, and public safety members serve our state with distinction in some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. Some of these workers suffer from injuries related to their work that warrant access to the workers' compensation system. We believe these employees are currently provided with fair access to the workers' compensation system for injuries, and therefore, AB 1020 is unnecessary. We reject the unproven assertion that a presumption is needed for these workers to fairly access benefits. We are not aware of any objective analysis that substantiates a need for the massive expansion of applicability for presumptions, as proposed by AB 1020.

California law provides that injuries are covered by workers' compensation if the injury is suffered during the course and scope of employment. Accordingly, injuries are covered if the employee is at work engaged in any work-related activity. Injured workers can file a claim providing details of their injury for the purposes of determining whether their injury meets the latter requirements. If there is a dispute over the facts of an injury, the decision is rendered by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) at the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board. The ALJ is already required by law to liberally construe California law with the

purpose of extending their benefits for the protection of persons injured in the course of their employment.

We anticipate that AB 1020 would add considerable new costs for public employers at a time when local budgets are facing significant headwinds. While the state grappled with bridging a \$32 billion revenue shortfall for the 2023 Budget Act, local governments were also handling the challenges of balancing budgets on the heels of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and 18 months of stubbornly high inflation. Further, per capita revenues for some local governments have never recovered from the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009, in real dollars. Regretfully, this means that any increase in costs as a result of AB 1020 may impact funding for the critical services provided by local governments, ranging from law enforcement and emergency service responses to behavioral health services, libraries, and agricultural services, to name just a few.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully urge you to veto AB 1020. Should you have any questions about our request, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,



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cc: The Honorable Timothy Grayson, 15th Assembly District
Mary Hernandez, Chief Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor
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