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July 18, 2023

The Honorable Brian Maienschein
Member, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 5640
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 972 (Maienschein) Local Assistance and Grant Program Streamlining Workgroup
Notice of SUPPORT (As Amended June 29, 2023)**

Dear Assemblymember Maienschein,

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in the state, is pleased to support of your Assembly Bill (AB) 972, which would coordinate, align, and streamline local government assistance resources to ensure that every community has the same opportunity to compete for state funding opportunities by convening a statewide, cross agency Local Assistance and Grant Program Streamlining Workgroup. Vitally, the workgroup would include members representing the local government entities with experience applying for and managing grant funding, including representation from the diverse array of our family of counties and the California State Association of Counties itself.

At the state level, local assistance efforts are largely conducted by individual grant programs, and, although centrally located via the California State Library's Grants Portal, nearly all state grant programs have unique and widely varied procedures for application and scoring. Further, although best practices for local assistance have been developed and published by the Strategic Growth Council, local assistance efforts are not uniformly conducted across state departments, offices, boards, commissions, and agencies.

Local agencies often lack the resources, staff capacity, implementation experience, and technical expertise to apply for and secure competitive statewide targeted grant funding. Additionally, like other sectors, local governments are facing staffing shortages, a wave of early retirement, and other workforce stressors on existing staff. Streamlined application processes and robust, uniform local assistance from the state is crucial for counties to effectively access state funding opportunities.

By aligning procedures of the financing programs under the purview of the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency, AB 972 will help stretch limited funding and bolster efforts to address shared state and local climate resiliency goals. The climate resiliency, natural resources, and environmental quality programs within

these agencies are nearly always funded with a combination of federal, state, and local resources. Counties are left to compete for scarce funding and stack various grant opportunities which increases the complexity of efficient and effective program implementation, monitoring, and compliance, and decreases the likelihood of successfully securing and deploying grant program funding. We believe the collective input from local and state government is necessary to reduce the inefficiencies of a fragmented state funding landscape and ensure we can meet our collective goals for climate resiliency.

It is for these reasons that CSAC **supports AB 972**. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at elawyer@counties.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Lawyer", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Lawyer
Legislative Advocate