



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

455 NORTH REXFORD DRIVE ▪ BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90210

Julian A. Gold, M.D., Mayor

July 12, 2023

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Chair, Assembly Committee on Local Government
1021 O. St, Suite 6350
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 537 (Becker) Open meetings: multijurisdictional, cross-county
City of Beverly Hills – SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry,

On behalf of the City of Beverly Hills, I write to you in SUPPORT of your SB 537 (Becker), which authorizes legislative bodies to teleconference their meetings without the need to notice and make publicly accessible each teleconference location, under the condition that the bill is amended to remove the 40-mile travel distance threshold.

During recent global events, we have seen the immense value remote participation can bring to local governments as well as to organizations such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Local Agency Formation Commission for the County of Los Angeles (LAFCO). Teleconferencing has been extremely important for these two agencies to meet as it has allowed for continued productivity and public involvement during periods of crisis when physical assembly is impractical or unsafe.

We believe this flexibility should be retained for situations beyond emergencies, including serving those with mobility challenges, reducing environmental impact from travel, and potentially expanding civic participation. Los Angeles County has 88 cities and over 10 million residents. Prior to teleconferencing being allowed due to COVID-19, it was oftentimes difficult to have a quorum present as Los Angeles County, which is a large region unto itself, has other factors contributing to a lack of a quorum such as traffic congestion in its heavily urbanized areas. For example, 40 miles in Los Angeles County (the distances from West Hollywood to Long Beach) can take upwards to two hours at peak traffic times and is one of the reasons we are requesting the bill to be amended. As such, traffic congestion and driving time should be given as much weight or more than total mile distances.

In our current digital age, it is vital that we adapt our practices and norms to ensure we are utilizing the tools available to us to streamline procedures and improve accessibility. This bill does just that by acknowledging the crucial role teleconferencing can play in public meetings.

Furthermore, SB 537 ensures the integrity and openness of public meetings remain intact. By requiring the disclosure of remote locations for members, retaining the obligation to provide a physical location for public attendance and comment, and necessitating real-time public input, SB 537 upholds key tenets of the Brown Act while modernizing its application.

The City of Beverly Hills is committed to ensuring the highest levels of public participation and transparency for effective governance. We believe this bill aligns with those goals and has the potential to improve the functioning of legislative bodies across the state provided the necessary amendments are made. For these reasons, the City of Beverly Hills SUPPORTS IF AMENDED SB 537.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julian A. Gold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "A".

Julian A. Gold, M.D.
Mayor, City of Beverly Hills

cc: The Honorable Josh Becker, Senator, 13th District
The Honorable Ben Allen, Senator, 24th District
The Honorable Rick Zbur, Assemblymember, 51st District
Andrew K. Antwih, Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange