



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service



April 15, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
California State Assembly
1020 O Street, Room 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 441 (Hadwick) – Wildfire prevention. As Introduced February 6, 2025 - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Wicks,

We, the undersigned supervisors representing the Counties of Lake, Mariposa, Napa, and Nevada write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 441, authored by Assemblymember Heather Hadwick. This measure extends two programs that are crucial for the future of California's wildfire prevention and mitigation goals: The Office of Wildfire Technology Research and Development (OWTRD) and the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP). AB 441 would ensure the continuation of both programs by removing the sunset date of the CWMP and extending the OWTRD through January 1, 2033. These programs not only serve to bring cutting-edge technologies to our fire-fighting efforts but also provide financial assistance to help members of our communities personally invest in home hardening initiatives which make our communities more resilient in the face of the growing wildfire threat across the State.

Numerous studies have shown that retrofitting homes to make them more resistant to the impacts of wildfire, known as home hardening, is an effective way to reduce the risk of ignition in the event of a high severity wildfire. This is particularly effective if home hardening efforts are implemented communitywide and to the highest standards. These retrofits are costly, however, and it can cost several thousands of dollars to harden an existing home to the most fire-resistant standard. Residents in our counties are spending millions of dollars annually to retrofit their homes; however, not every property owner can afford the average cost of \$30,000-\$40,000 to fully fire-harden an older home. Many of these homeowners are also struggling to obtain affordable property insurance due to wildfire risk.

In 2019, Assembly Bill 38 (Wood) included, among other things, a program to aid low-income homeowners in high fire hazard areas with grant funds to help retrofit their homes. The CWMP, as it is now known, is serving as a pilot and is currently funding projects in six California counties to aid low-income residents in fire prone communities with home hardening measures. CWMP currently has a July 1, 2029, sunset date and counties could conceivably be actively funding and completing projects when the program is set to end. We believe the program should not only be made permanent but should be funded in a manner that would allow it to transcend its pilot status and extend statewide.

In addition, in 2021, Senate Bill 109 (Dodd) established the OWTRD within CAL FIRE to study, test, and advise regarding procurement of emerging technologies and tools to more effectively prevent and suppress wildfires throughout the state, with a sunset date of January 1, 2029. Given the frequency, severity, and destructive nature of California's wildfires, it is imperative that the work of OWTRD continue in perpetuity so the state can remain a leader in fire prevention and suppression efforts for the safety and welfare of its residents. We see AB 441's extension of the sunset date to January 1, 2033, as a critical next step. Both are vital programs that warrant certainty in advance so that they can continue to help protect California residents

from the devastating impacts of wildfires. For these reasons, we strongly support SB 441 and urge its swift passage.

Sincerely,

Eddie Crandell
Supervisor, District 3, Lake County

Anne Cottrell
Supervisor, District 3, Napa County

Rosemarie Smallcombe
Supervisor, District 1, Mariposa County

Heidi Hall
Supervisor, District 1, Nevada County