



**COUNTY OF LAKE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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February 14, 2023

The Honorable Assemblymember Vince Fong
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 297 (Fong) Wildfires: Local Assistance Grant Program: Advance Payments

Dear Honorable Assemblymember Fong,

The County of Lake is proud to Support your Assembly Bill 297. As presently written, AB 297 would extend CAL FIRE's ability to offer Advance Payments of up to 25% of the total grant amount from its Wildfire Prevention Grants program to January 1, 2034.

Since 2015, destructive wildfires have consumed nearly 70% of Lake County's total landmass, leading to large scale evacuations, significant loss of property, and tragic loss of life. You will be aware, Lake is one of the most under-resourced and impoverished California Counties. CAL FIRE grants are foundational to our capacity to mitigate hazard fuels that continue to imperil Lake County, and accessing advance payments for this work is essential.

Mitigation of wildfire risk is of paramount importance to our communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface. CAL FIRE's recently-updated draft Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps indicate a 14.6 percent increase in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) acreage across all State responsibility Areas (SRA) since 2007. 92.8% of Lake County's SRAs have been designated in the VHFHSZ; nearly a third of which was designated as Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (MFHSZ) fifteen years ago. During their public comment hearing before our board on January 24, 2023, CAL FIRE additionally noted Lake County's Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs) would move to VHFHSZ due to substandard and older housing stock. This paints a sobering view of how dramatically Lake County's wildfire patterns and risk have been exacerbated by climate change.

Significant attention to fuels treatment is critical; CAL FIRE advance payments will support that work, and assurance those payments will continue through January 1, 2034 will significantly enhance our ability to mitigate wildfire risk. Funds will support interventions such as fuel reduction, community fuel breaks, and home hardening education, particularly crucial in socioeconomically disadvantaged Counties like Lake.

For these reasons, the County of Lake supports AB297, as written. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (707) 263-2368.

Respectfully,

COUNTY OF LAKE

Jessica Pyska, Chair

Cc: Honorable State Senator Mike McGuire
Honorable Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry