



COUNTY OF LAKE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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To the Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom:

We write to you today with great concern for the future of our fairgrounds. Fairgrounds represent so much of our social fabric in rural areas such as Lake County. Fairgrounds are used in emergencies and they still highlight our local economy, agriculture. We request that you review the use of AB1499 and release the remaining funds from your annual budget to help keep our fairgrounds in good financial standing.

Fairgrounds in areas like Lake County create a local venue for many different activities. From our racetrack to the bi-annual county fair to weekly event shows and conferences, our fairgrounds are a central focal point for our population to come together. Rural communities such as ours lack the large offering of venues that could bring in exhibits such as the "T. Rex Planet", Quilt Show, and more. In a 2015 Economic Impact Study for Lake County, it was estimated that \$14.5 million was brought to our communities due to the fairgrounds activities creating an equivalent of 89 jobs as a result of the spending by the fairgrounds. It is important as we slowly move towards a resolution the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that we maintain this venue for the future of our communities here in Lake County as many of our residents do not have the capability to access venues outside of our county. It is crucial that we have this long-standing traditional landmark supported by all, including the state.

Lake County is no stranger to emergencies unfortunately. However, our fairgrounds have consistently been used for staging CalFire, PG&E, and many others including sheltering those that are victims of these tragedies. The property is setup for these types of scenarios and by shutting down, or not supporting our fairgrounds to ensure their financial security, we endanger our future capability to support our first responders and support our community members who are displaced and traumatized by these major catastrophes. The Lake County Fairgrounds is part of our team, a part of our network to ensuring that we are responding appropriately, and we need your support in keeping it as such. Agriculture is a great part of our economy here in Lake County, and the fairgrounds plays a crucial role in it. The fairgrounds support 4H and FFA programs and provide the space to show off our latest crops at our weekly Farmers' Market and our latest animals that were raised by our future farmers. Our fairgrounds help to breed the future of the industry that drives our economy. In a county where economic hardship is real for so many of our economic sectors due to COVID-19, agriculture remains an essential job in feeding America and its many affiliated sectors and provides for a good opportunity for our community members to make a living. By not supporting our local fairgrounds, we are endangering the future of this particularly important industry in Lake County.

Fairgrounds have been supported by recent legislation and your latest budget. However, legislation such as AB1499 has been re-interpreted to the detriment of our fairgrounds. AB1499 was meant to ensure the longevity of our fairgrounds with financial support from the state with a requirement that ¾ of 1% of gross receipts are to be allocated fairs statewide. The total amount budgeted has dropped significantly making it difficult for our fairgrounds to survive through this pandemic where revenue from events have all been cancelled. In this fiscal year's budget, there is also \$40.3 million set aside to

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support fairgrounds once all staff have been laid off. We salute those fairs who chose to try their best to manage and not lay off all staff, therefore making it difficult to access these funds. Yet simultaneously, it has created an awkward relationship when the county is requesting to utilize our local fairgrounds to provide housing or support for COVID-19 when they do not have the resources to support the costs of using the fairgrounds and the county is unable to provide those resources as well. How can we expect our fairgrounds to do their part in our community if they must layoff their staff prior to accessing budgeted funds? It is believed an understood that \$21.9 million still remains in this fund for fairgrounds. This is a great opportunity for all fairgrounds to continue their benefits to the communities they serve by spreading that money and looking at changing the criteria for which it can be used. We must not allow our fairgrounds to shut down.

We request that you review AB1499. We agree with the letter written by Assemblymember Gray who authored the original bill. The amount set aside for our fairs is not enough to allow them to survive the year, with our local fairgrounds estimating they can only afford to stay in the black until the end of March, 2021. We request that you increase that amount and allocate it to our fairs immediately. We also request that you release the budgeted amount that is leftover, not simply for staff that is laid off, but to provide for staff to keep working and the fairgrounds and to keep paying its bills. In turn this will greatly change the possibilities of what our fairgrounds can do to provide assistance in fighting COVID-19 and finding respite in these troubling days ahead. Should you deny these requests, our final request is to sit down with the state to figure out what the future of the fairgrounds will be and how we can collaborate on ensuring its benefits can continue to be manifested locally.

We thank you for your time and consideration and hope you can find a solution to ensure that our fairgrounds can continue to be a partner for our communities, through our emergencies, and for the legacy of Lake County agriculture.

Respectfully submitted,

COUNTY OF LAKE

, Chair