



May 27, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, 1st floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President Pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: COVID-19 Impacts on California's Special Districts Providing Local Fire Protection Services

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tempore Atkins, and Speaker Rendon:

We urge you to acknowledge the crucial role special district first responders play in not only COVID-19 response and recovery, but in our primary role as defenders of public safety in our local communities, by extending relief funding to offset the impact of pandemic response and recovery efforts.

California's fire protection districts continue to serve tirelessly as vital frontline responders during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; yet we have been excluded from access to state and federal relief funds – and continue to be excluded under existing funding proposals in this year's budget.

The collective mission of fire districts throughout California is to ensure the safety of our communities. The losses experienced statewide as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued exclusion from relief funding will result in compromising the capacity to fulfill this mission. These impacts are ultimately absorbed by those we serve, resulting in reduced service, un-funded programs, deferred capital projects, and potential disruptions to a special district's ability to contribute meaningfully to mutual aid response.

Despite the profound impact of pandemic response both fiscally and operationally, and the physical and emotional toll it has posed to our staffs, we ensured the health and safety of our local communities:

- **We changed operational response protocols** more than one month before a State of Emergency Declaration was made in California, as the CDC confirmed the first COVID-19 case in the State on January 26, 2020.
- **We altered every aspect of how service is provided to protect health and safety**, including PPE protocols, patient care protocols, supply utilization and stocking, health and safety procedures, staffing plans, and exposure reporting, among a multitude of others.
- **We pivoted quickly each time new guidance and recommendations were issued** by public health officials – implementing these changes came at a significant cost.
 - Faster PPE and supply burn rates resulted in increased PPE and supply costs; increases that were exacerbated by supply chain disruptions.
- **We maintained reliable service levels** even as workers' compensation claims and overtime costs skyrocketed as maintaining sufficient staffing in a high-exposure environment became the norm.

- **We provided testing and vaccination services**, supporting public health officials in their efforts throughout the State – these activities were essential, but further increased labor costs.
- **We diverted EMS transport to reduce the burden on local hospitals**, prepositioning staffing in dispatch and within transport to triage on site where possible – this resulted in fee-for-service revenues plummeting for a good portion of 2020.

The cumulative result of increased costs and reduced revenues has crippled fire protection district budgets throughout the State.

While other industries and public service agencies have access to lifeline funding, this funding has not been made available to the very agencies that provide lifeline support to the community. We greatly appreciate the proposed investments in fire suppression, prevention, and mitigation – but we also are in dire need of relief to continue to provide these same essential services.

As we approach what promises to be another catastrophic fire season in the third driest year on record, and in order to support the essential work that fire districts provide to California's communities to protect life and property, **we urge you to build upon existing investments in the Wildfire Prevention and Resilience Proposals by creating grant funding available to impacted special districts providing fire protection – such as fire protection and community services districts - for purposes allowable under the American Rescue Plan Act guidelines.**

Districts such as ours are in desperate need of relief funding in order to be able to respond aggressively to the next disaster.

Sincerely,



Joshua Green

Cosumnes CSD General Manager



Felipe Rodríguez

Cosumnes CSD Fire Chief