



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Devon Mathis
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2111
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 926 – SUPPORT
As Introduced February 17, 2021**

Dear Assembly Member Mathis:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for your Assembly Bill 926, which would add roadside vegetation management and projects to create and increase defensible space for critical infrastructure to existing local assistance grant programs at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

RCRC member counties have suffered the vast majority of the state's most catastrophic wildfire events in the last decade, including the devastating Carr Fire in Shasta County in 2018. The ignition point of the Carr Fire was a vehicle spark alongside a state road flanked by dense, dry vegetation - something that could have been prevented with proper brush clearing. Subsequently, the Carr Fire destroyed more than 1,000 homes and 1,600 structures, killing five civilians and three firefighters. While California has numerous programs to address the State's wildfire problem, including various forest management programs as part of Senate Bill 901 (Dodd) in 2018 and the Administration's recently unveiled Forest Action Plan, there is still an urgent need for short-term solutions to help local fire prevention agencies protect California's communities while we work toward more resilient, fire-resistant landscapes.

AB 926 provides vital community protection capacity to local fire prevention entities by adding projects to address roadside vegetation management as well as community defensible space for critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and potential evacuation routes, to existing local assistance grant programs at CAL FIRE. These additions will provide resources for essential short-term community protection efforts by local governments, fire safe councils and other fire prevention entities

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The Honorable Devon Mathis
Assembly Bill 926
February 24, 2021
Page 2

to help safeguard residents in high fire risk areas of the state. The addition of these projects is particularly important since many rural counties where vegetation is most dense are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and such a program will enable communities to enhance local wildfire mitigation programs.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports your AB 926. If you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", written in a cursive style.

STACI HEATON
Senior Regulatory Affairs Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee