

California Legislature

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0115

January 27, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Program

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We write to strongly urge you to quickly reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act to support our drowning rural communities across the state of California.

A promise was made to California's rural counties by the federal government over a century ago through the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. Counties gave up their forestland to the Forest Service to be used for logging operations. In exchange for their lost tax revenue, counties received a share of the logging profits and a portion of other funds generated through multi-use activities to fund roads, schools, and infrastructure. Now, approximately 20 million acres or 20 percent of California is Forest Service land owned by the federal government.

Since 1908, the SRS program has been a lifeline for California counties that have heavily relied on its funds to support vital services. Last year, the program paid nearly \$40 million to 39 counties. The last Secure Rural Schools payment was in April and according to the Forest Service, the program will be off schedule by the end of January. Without reauthorization, rural counties already threatened by a dwindling tax base will lack the money for basic repairs to school buildings, lay off teachers and staff, and cut programs critical to serving impoverished, high-needs children in remote communities.

Eliminating SRS funding will also damage California's ability to fight wildfires. This funding has historically supported the maintenance of thousands of miles of forest roads, which are essential for public access, emergency response, and fire management. As the firestorms in Los Angeles demonstrate, California's wildfires grow increasingly destructive, and the need for well-maintained roads in the wildland-urban interface is greater than ever before.

Failing to reauthorize the SRS program will be the death knell for our suffering rural communities. Without this funding, rural schools will continue to consolidate and close. Our rural counties have lost as much as 21 percent of our population due to a lack of educational opportunities. Once a school closes in a remote rural community, it will never reopen, and without a school, the community will wither and die.

We urge you to keep your promise to rural communities in California who need support more than ever. Please keep rural America alive by immediately reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools program.

Sincerely,



HEATHER HADWICK
Assemblymember, District 1



CHRIS ROGERS
Assemblymember, District 2



JAMES GALLAGHER
Assemblymember, District 3



JOE PATTERSON
Assemblymember, District 5



HEATH FLORA
Assemblymember, District 9



ESMERALDA SORIA
Assemblymember, District 27



ALEXANDRA MACEDO
Assemblymember, District 33



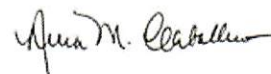
MIKE MCGUIRE
Senator, District 2



MEGAN DAHLE
Senator, District 1



SHANNON GROVE
Senator, District 12



ANNA CABALLERO
Senator, District 14



MELISSA HURTADO
Senator, District 16



ROSILICIE OCHOA BOGH
Senator, District 19



SUZETTE VALLADARES
Senator, District 23



TOM LACKEY

Assemblymember, District 34



KELLY SEYARTO

Senator, District 32



JEFF GONZALEZ

Assemblymember, District 36



BRIAN JONES

Senator, District 40



STEVE BENNETT

Assemblymember, District 38



JUAN CARRILLO

Assemblymember, District 39



GREG WALLIS

Assemblymember, District 47



BILL ESSAYLI

Assemblymember, District 63



CARL DEMAIO

Assemblymember, District 75