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Gavin Newsom, Governor

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March 17, 2025

The Honorable Steve Padilla, Chair
Senate Committee on Governmental Organizations
1020 N Street, 584
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 470 (Laird) Bagley-Keen Open Meeting Act: teleconferencing (SUPPORT)

Dear Honorable Chair,

On behalf of the California Commission on Aging (CCoA), I am pleased to express our strong support as the organizational sponsor of SB 470 (Laird), which indefinitely extends the alternative teleconferencing provisions under the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. By removing the current January 1, 2026, repeal date, SB 470 ensures that state bodies, including advisory commissions like CCoA, can continue leveraging modern teleconferencing technology, for greater public participation and increased diversity among Commissioners, ensuring broad representation and greater efficiency while maintaining full communications transparency.

In 2023, the Legislature recognized the critical need for increased flexibility in public meetings by passing SB 544 (Laird), which provided a pathway for advisory bodies to meet virtually while maintaining transparency and public participation. This was a significant step in modernizing California's approach to open meetings. SB 470 builds upon that progress by making these provisions permanent, ensuring that public bodies can continue operating in a manner that is both inclusive and efficient.

California's aging population is rapidly growing, and public input from older adults and stakeholders across diverse geographic regions is essential to shaping effective policies. Remote participation removes significant barriers for those with mobility challenges, caregiving responsibilities, or limited transportation options. For the CCoA, a body representing stakeholders from across the state, these teleconferencing provisions have been invaluable in increasing engagement, allowing broader public access, and improving overall governmental transparency.

SB 470 maintains strong safeguards to ensure accountability and public access, including:

- Requiring a primary physical location for public participation;
- Mandating visible on-camera participation by members during open meetings; and
- Ensuring staff presence at the designated physical location to facilitate public engagement.



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By making these provisions permanent, California will avoid unnecessary disruptions to established meeting structures and uphold the principles of open governance while embracing the practical benefits of technology. Passage of this bill is budget neutral and will likely lead to cost savings for the state through reductions in advisory board member travel.

We urge your support for SB 470 to ensure that state and advisory bodies can continue serving the public effectively while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or Karol Swartzlander, CCoA Executive Director, at karol.swartzlander@ccoa.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lindeman".

Dr. David Lindeman
Chair
California Commission on Aging