
LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

STATE AND FEDERAL PRIORITIES



Photo by Susie Nava

Kings County Board of Supervisors

February 2024

KINGS COUNTY 2024 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM – KINGS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The CrisCom Company, in conjunction with Kings County administrative staff and department heads, has identified several priority areas for legislative action and monitoring in the first term of the 2023-2024 State legislative session. Many of the legislative priorities are carryovers from the previous session. These topics have immediate and lasting impacts to the County, the health and safety of its residents, and a variety of constituents who are reliant upon local government's effectiveness and representation. While this list is detailed, by no means is it written in stone. The county must remain flexible to pivot as new items are proposed, and new problems and solutions emerge.

Legislative Priorities:

1. Water, Natural Resources & Agriculture
2. Unfunded mandates
3. Homelessness
4. High Speed Rail

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & AGRICULTURE

Find solutions for dealing with water shortages and flooding. California has the unfortunate characteristic of being prone to prolonged and severe droughts at any time, and farmers in Kings County routinely must take steps to prepare for continued severe reduction in water during the summer months. In addition to having negative impacts on jobs and the food supply for this state and the nation, water is essential for the thriving agriculture industry in Kings County and contributes to the local economy through direct production and the multiplier effect of support industries. Kings County, with nearly 92% of its land in agricultural use, ranks 8th in agricultural value among all counties in California, which is the number one agricultural producing state in the nation. Without increased water storage, the demands placed on our water resources will not be achieved for food and fiber, urbanized growth, energy needs, or habitat restoration. At present, an estimated 50% of Kings County's water use comes from groundwater. Because of Endangered Species Act-related court rulings and ongoing historic drought conditions, imported state water has become extremely limited in Kings County and groundwater levels are at historic lows. Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) may further restrict access to groundwater in the future.

Much of the Kings County economy is based on agribusiness. Accordingly, when farmers are unable to obtain water to produce crops, laborers, process workers, processors, and truck drivers cannot find work. The result is that neither essential component of our county's workforce can conduct business and contribute to our local economy. In past droughts, there has been a direct correlation between the reduction in planting and the Kings County unemployment rate that was well above the state and national averages. Prolonging the planning or delaying the funding for water storage/reservoir/hydropower projects is counterproductive to the demands that population growth places upon our region, as well as our state. Bringing desperately needed water to our communities is essential. Kings County supports efforts to enhance regional water supply reliability through increased surface water supply, surface water storage, and the implementation of additional conjunctive use projects.

The County will advocate for legislation that streamlines the permitting processes for storage projects both on-stream and off-stream. In addition, and as member of the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority (SJVWIA), the County will continue to support regional efforts to construct water infrastructure and storage projects. Notably, the County supports efforts towards the Raising Pine Flat Dam Resiliency Project, which will bring increased water capacity, sustainability, and drought resiliency to the region. Kings County also supports efforts to bring greater accountability to the California Water Commission Water Storage Investment Program, ensuring better articulation of their scoring criteria for water infrastructure projects and working collaboratively with project applicants such as the SJVWIA. In addition to support for regional water infrastructure and storage projects, the County supports funding efforts for Airborne Snow Surveys which will provide the watershed with a full suite of critical snow survey tools to meet water management and climate change challenges.

The County will advocate for statewide policy changes that will facilitate groundwater storage and banking projects to meet local needs to replenish depleted groundwater aquifers and lessen the stress on those aquifers in times of drought. The County will support and engage in regional efforts that will protect Kings County water supplies and help

mitigate the impacts of Groundwater Sustainability Plan implementation.

A significant portion of the county is considered a disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged community and lacks the resources to ensure a safe and reliable source of potable water and wastewater treatment. The County will continue to advocate for the funding of water supply projects that benefit disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities to ensure that they have access to a reliable water supply that meets safe drinking water standards.

The County will support legislative reform that enhances the ability of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA's) to implement groundwater sustainability plans and requisite management actions locally. Support increased funding for GSA planning and implementation efforts with particular focus on planning and data capture to meet the SGMA.

Regulatory restrictions on pumping in the Delta have led to increased reliance on groundwater which has led to groundwater depletion, water quality degradation, and impacts to infrastructure. The County will support legislative efforts to implement adaptive management of Delta pumping to maximize surface water deliveries in times of excess.

Oppose legislation that limits Delta pumping and continues to flush surface/runoff water through the Delta to the Pacific Ocean, leaving south-of-Delta communities without sufficient vital water resources or the ability to store critical resources in times of excess flows.

Oppose any and all efforts to expand the definition of wetlands that will increase regulatory burdens on growers in Kings County.

The County will support local efforts to implement conservation programs in coordination with community service districts and cities within the county and advocate for funding of voluntary conservation technology implementation. The County will oppose mandatory statewide conservation regulations that unnecessarily complicate and duplicate local efforts.

The County supports the beneficial use of water for irrigation of all crops and any post-harvest processing of agricultural commodities that are marketed both domestically and globally.

Support legislative reforms that will reduce the water delivery costs under the State Water Project.

Support the Voluntary Settlement Agreement process if the agreement does not result in reduced water availability or increase the cost of State Water Project deliveries to the county. Kings County opposes any agreement that would increase the cost of water delivery to its disadvantaged communities or agricultural water districts.

Support legislation that provides subsidence mitigation funding for the streams, aqueducts, and canals that deliver water to the region.

Support legislative efforts to streamline onerous and duplicative regulatory burdens that have significantly increased input costs to farmers in the county. Support funding that will reduce the financial impact of regulatory implementation on landowners.

Oppose legislation that would impact or inhibit standard and accepted farming practices, which could have effects on Agriculture.

The County will advocate for increased funding and exploration of the use of excess solar energy and the expansion of solar-powered pumping systems and water treatment to increase groundwater recharge within the region.

Support and advocate for the full state program allocation for the *Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emission Reductions (FARMER)* Program at an amount of \$193 million per fiscal year through Fiscal Year 2023- 2024. These funds will assist in achieving the State's commitment to reduce emissions from heavy-duty agricultural off-road equipment in the San Joaquin Valley (12,000 tractors by 2024) and provide for significant air quality, and related community health, improvements throughout the county, valley, and state. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has identified a funding need of \$193 million per year through 2024 to meet the State Implementation Plan commitment to reduce agricultural equipment emissions and assist the Valley in meeting air quality and public health

goals.

Seek legislative support to reestablish Williamson Act subvention funds for counties with “white areas” under SGMA, and explore the possibility of using the Cap and Trade funding to cover the ongoing cost. Elimination of the Williamson Act Subvention funding has financially strapped our rural county. Losing the subvention funds has had a negative impact to the County as well as the landowners within the county. The implementation of SGMA has put more responsibilities on counties. Legislative support to re-establish reimbursements to participating counties is essential to agricultural preservation in the State and conversion to solar, which reduced tax revenues.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Local health departments advocate for sufficient funding to carry out emerging infectious diseases identification, prevention, and response as well as responsibilities needed to expand services in case of an identified pandemic. Local health departments should be engaged in developing state orders, guidance, and plans.

California’s local health departments (LHDs) have been significantly underfunded, resulting in the slow decline in public health infrastructure. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, public health departments were not well equipped to perform core functions such as contact tracing and isolation. In addition, before COVID-19, insufficient funding has been provided to LHDs to address chronic diseases and the social determinants of health to advance health equity. Instead, LHDs are provided increments of limited-term, categorical funding that do not allow LHDs to strengthen and ensure the integrity of the public health infrastructure and workforce, including modernizing data and surveillance systems. Further, incremental funding received by LHDs do not allow for improvements in local emergency preparedness capacities for weather-related events or infectious disease outbreaks. As such, counties will continue to advocate for funding to rebuild and strengthen the public health infrastructure across all local health departments.

HEALTH & WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH

Advocate for maintaining sufficient health realignment funding to ensure that counties have the resources to meet their obligations to fulfill their statutory public health and indigent health care mandates. Oppose new mandates without specified, stable, and adequate funding commitments.

Support legislation that would create, protect, and optimize long-term funding and support for core local public health services and public health laboratories. This includes an adequate and trained workforce to provide services, public health laboratories, communication, surveillance and disease tracking systems, community involvement, partnerships, and other components of contemporary public health practice.

Support funding for essential public health functions and workforce, including but not limited to monitoring community health; investigating health hazards; providing community outreach, education, expansion of communicable disease, including sexually transmitted infection, investigation and prevention capacity and linkages to critical services; regulating and enforcing food safety; implementing prevention programs such as immunizations, chronic disease, maternal, child and adolescent health; and other duly enacted laws designed to protect public health.

Public Health has long supported and has recognized the need for Health Equity and identification of health disparities in populations served. We support funding and initiatives that promote identification of Health Disparities and Health Equity, however, any mandates of this nature that are required by the state should have adequate and sustainable funding provided to support the mandate.

Advocate for and support a simplified process of contracting with the California Department of Public Health and Department of Health Care Services to allow local health departments to develop a system for the delivery of comprehensive and coordinated public health services to their communities. And:

- Discourage complex administrative requirements or request for proposal (RFP) processes in favor of basic plan submission, subventions, or contractual obligations.
- Ensure local health departments are given maximum discretion as to how they implement or achieve the objective set by legislation.
- Oppose creating new and independent governance and administrative structures at the local level to create or implement new social/health programs.

Support highlighting Public Health programming within higher education, including incentives to increase public health laboratory staff, public health microbiologists, public health nurses, registered environmental health specialists (REHS), public health nutritionists/dietitians, epidemiologists, and public health educators.

Support the Statewide development of a health information exchange system; including proposals to provide funding to local health departments and health systems to support the infrastructure and staff development necessary to implement meaningful use of health information data and particularly the use of health information to advance understanding and improvement in population health strategies. Ensure any state Health Information Technology legislation is consistent with federal statute and regulatory requirements. Support efforts to allow bi-directional information sharing across county systems as well as with external partners to improve system efficiency that would include telemedicine and broadband development.

Monitor the California Children Services (CCS) program and seek protections against increased county program costs. Oppose any efforts to require counties to provide funding for the CCS program beyond their Maintenance of Effort (MOE). Explore opportunities to "realign" county share of cost for CCS back to the state. Advocate for CCS pilot project implementation strategies that do not destabilize the current CCS program. Ensure counties retain sufficient resources to meet their CCS responsibilities, including those remaining under the Whole Child Model.

Support legislation to reduce inequities in maternal, infant, and child health and designed to maximize the health and quality of life for all women, infants, children, adolescents, and their families in California. Support efforts to integrate trauma informed practices into both newly proposed or existing programs and services provided to women, infants, children, and adolescents. Support policies and programs to reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy and assist with family planning.

Support legislation that decreases health disparities among children in foster care, including ensuring coordinated health care services for children in out-of-home foster care or on probation.

Support continued funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Support programs to fund opioid research and monitoring as well as expand emergency treatment resources and increase capacity to provide long-term prevention and treatment services. Support legislation that allows for the continued expansion on treatment and preventive harm reduction programs such as naloxone distribution.

Support funding for public health research and monitoring of vaping use patterns and associated adverse effects. Advocate for vaping taxation to invest in health education to youth.

Support funding for Valley Fever research, treatment, and vaccine development.

Support legislation to improve minimum levels of cooling of ambient air in rental housing, single family dwellings, and in multi-unit housing to reduce health disparities and inequities by working to eliminate barriers to good health for Kings County's low-income population.

Support policies or funding to improve the control of mosquitoes which transmit human diseases such as Zika virus, West Nile virus, Chikungunya virus, Dengue fever, and Malaria.

Support effective parent education and engagement and expand access to effective evidence-based family strengthening programs, including parent engagement and home visitation programming.

Support funding and legislation for public health emergency preparedness, response, and recovery from natural and

man-made disasters, such as extreme temperatures, flood, drought, pandemic disease, and bioterrorism.

Support legislation that would allow rural communities to provide more comprehensive hospital, medical, pharmaceutical services, including changes to zoning laws and other such requirements.

Kings County supports maintaining existing laws and regulations governing the role of counties in the oversight of prehospital emergency medical services including, but not limited to, medical first response ambulance services. The County also supports legislation or regulatory reform that would enhance county authority and increase funding for such oversight. The County opposes any efforts to decrease county authority to oversee the emergency medical services (EMS) system and to reduce the mandated roles of the local EMS agency in planning, implementing, evaluating, and regulating EMS systems and opposes any efforts to limit the authority of the local Emergency Medical Services Medical Director over pre-hospital patient care including disciplinary actions over licensed or certified personnel.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Support funding for the recently approved Senate Bill 43 which essentially revised the state's involuntary detention and conservatorship laws under the Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act in a manner that will ultimately significantly increase the number of individuals who can be placed on an involuntary detention and/or be petitioned for conservatorship. This will greatly increase the number of individuals detained and transported by mobile crisis teams and law enforcement, the number of individuals requiring medical clearance through an emergency room, and the number of individuals requiring placement to a secure psychiatric inpatient facility. This will also require a significant increase in the number of individuals requiring conservatorship proceedings thus significantly impacting County Counsels, Public Guardian Offices, and County Behavioral Health. Although the Senate Bill creates this type of significant resource impact to so many agencies and entities, it did not come with dedicated state funding to support these expanded obligations. Lastly, due to the change in who can qualify for involuntary detention and conservatorship (expansion to those with only a "severe" substance use disorder causing grave disability), those meeting this criteria will require a secure ("locked") treatment setting for substance use disorders, and because this is new criteria, these placements do not currently exist in a manner anywhere near the scope and volume anticipated to be caused by this expansion. Therefore, the state will need to more intentionally address this barrier. Below are bulleted points released by the California Behavioral Health Director's Association (CBHDA) which is assisting County Behavioral Health Directors with the recent Senate Bill 43 (while there is a 3-page fact sheet and talking points, the below are specific to the fiscal impacts):

- LPS law changes do not trigger new state funding. The state pays nothing toward public guardians, funding for designated individuals to conduct assessments, or the Patient's Rights Advocates needed to make determinations and conduct investigations and manage conservatorships. In fact, county behavioral health often funds these functions within their existing resources.
- It also would not require funding for expanded treatment services, including SUD, mental health, or new physical health providers necessary to evaluate grave disability on the basis of failing to meet basic medical needs.
- The federal and state governments provide no reimbursement for long-term residential and inpatient drug treatment under Medi-Cal.
- Commercial insurance plans often deny counties' requests for reimbursement for mobile crisis, crisis, and inpatient residential SUD treatment services.
- If courts were to order involuntary SUD treatment, they would not be bound by what Medi-Cal or other insurance payers would cover, leaving counties with a significant unfunded mandate.
- This structural lack of reimbursement, across our major public and private insurance payers has directly led to the scarcity of SUD residential and inpatient treatment capacity.
- Addressing reimbursement for involuntary long-term inpatient and residential care, which would not be reimbursed through Medi-Cal or other payers, particularly those in locked settings, would need to be addressed in order to ensure adequate access to humane treatment.
- California needs to invest more in consistent, sustainable reimbursement for longer-term residential and inpatient SUD treatment to both prevent the deterioration of individuals and to assist with long-term treatment and recovery. Unfortunately, this policy allows for policymakers to side-step that larger structural need, along with the need to address long-term housing needs for Californians.

Support the funding of mobile crisis support care and regional mental health support care. Support any legislation that would provide additional funding to combat Fentanyl use.

Enhance Board and Care rates to prevent further loss of critical housing for clients with serious mental illness (SMI) and build out housing options. This is needed to support the rapidly growing aging population of low-income adults who are most at-risk of homelessness, including persons with SMI.

Fund Pretrial Mental Health Diversion. There is an overrepresentation of individuals with SMI in the criminal justice system. All too often, individuals with SMI in crisis are inappropriately routed by law enforcement into jails and ultimately prison, instead of receiving treatment in the community. California passed in 2018 AB 1810 which establishes pre-trial mental health diversion in CA for individuals with SMI and who could be experiencing homelessness. State funding would help alleviate strains on justice systems and break the cycle of individuals experiencing homelessness with SMI from cycling in and out of the justice system.

Support policies addressing the promotion of wellness, including the use of telepsychiatry, by meeting patient needs, and reducing barriers to care, at the lowest level of care before behavioral health issues require higher level, intensive services (i.e., emergency department, jail, and psychiatric hospitalization).

Support policies that seek to reduce health disparities and inequities by working to eliminate barriers to good health and seek to intervene early, at the lowest level of care, for Kings County's diverse population.

Support legislation or State budget actions that will expand the availability of supportive housing that provides coordinated services for County residents.

Support legislation that would enhance suicide prevention within the County as well as provide a means for more accurately measuring the incidence of suicide and allocating its occurrence to the appropriate jurisdiction of origin.

Advocate full funding for Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court to not burden local county government operations.

HUMAN SERVICES

Support and advocate for increased funding for all aspects of the Human Services Department. Seek an increase in foster care and child welfare service funding. This is a critical need as it relates to placement housing for children in the program. Support efforts to increase the State's portion of Extended Foster Care Program funding beyond the county contribution cap to decrease the fiscal burden on the county in providing extended Foster Care payments and services from age 18 to age 21, which has shown to increase the outcome success of our transitioning foster youth. This will help to correct the funding gap due to the underestimated 60% participation at the inception of the legislation to the actual 90% participation by foster youth in this program.

Support efforts to increase the administrative funding for In Home Supportive Services (and fund current and anticipated caseload increase in IHSS), Medi-Cal, as well as adequately fund the Resource Family Approval and Independent Living Programs. Provide additional funding to counties to support disaster service workers and mass shelter. Additional resources and funding to provide services to youth with complex needs. Support an overhaul on homeless housing funding allocations. Smaller counties are not getting an adequate share since they cannot complete with point in time (PIT) counts of larger counties. The methodology is faulty.

PUBLIC SAFETY

KINGS COUNTY SHERIFF

Provide new resources on sustaining and funding local gang prevention and enforcement activities. Resources will offer additional routes to sustaining local youth and gang violence prevention efforts.

Provide growth funding for the base court security funding. Costs continue to rise and outpace the state funding. Safety and security in courtrooms are being compromised due to the lack of funding needed to adequately staff existing and new courthouses.

We strive to always maintain high levels of community trust, support, and engagement by ensuring the integrity, ethics, and professionalism of Sheriffs and their employees. As public servants charged with protecting our communities, we strive to accomplish that goal while maintaining accountability to those we protect and serve. Sheriffs will seek additional and sustainable funding for peace officer training through the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to help continue these efforts and ensure the best training is available, delivered, and utilized to safeguard and protect all individuals.

Change penalty under incompetent to stand trial (IST) Growth Cap to “may” instead of “shall” for counties operating Jail Based Competency Treatment Program (JBCT) and Early Access and Stabilization Services (EASS).

Allow communication with Federal Partners on immigration status of person encountered, who may be from Terrorist Countries or State from the list identified by the state Department as terrorist organizations.

The County has a 20 plus million inmate transitional housing construction project in preliminary drawings for transitional housing for inmates within 90 days of release, which needs funding.

Public Safety Resources

We strive to enhance and protect all funding for local public safety protection programs, including those that pay for deputy sheriffs on the street, keep correctional officers in our custodial facilities, support victims, and assist critical investigations. So that we may ensure we are able to fund necessary programs, we will continue to pursue full reimbursement of the costs of state and federal mandates and oppose unfunded state mandates on sheriffs.

Homelessness / Mental Illness

The issues of homelessness and mental illness squarely intersect with the criminal justice space, specifically and especially in terms of law enforcement’s interactions with these populations on the street and in county jails. When coupled together, and especially when exacerbated by co-occurring substance use disorder, these issues greatly affect public safety and sheriffs’ resources. Examples include challenges around providing appropriate mental health care and competency restoration services, strains on available custodial programming, rampant overdose deaths, and churning jail populations. Stakeholders should pursue a multi-element approach to address these issues with not only resources but also a reckoning of how prior and current policies and actions (e.g., Proposition 47, reduced accountability, etc.) have led or contributed to this multi-part problem. However, due to their complexities, it may also be time to consider these two issues separately, in order to focus fuller attention on each in terms of achieving successful outcomes.

Court Security Funding

Costs to provide vital court security continue to rise and outpace state funding. Judges, litigants, attorneys, court officers, and employees expect and deserve safe levels of security and sheriffs are caught between a desire and obligation to provide court security and the challenge of doing so with resources that no longer cover costs. Sheriffs seek adequate and sustainable funding for not only the provision of base court security services but also that resulting from new courthouses coming online.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Support any increase in funding for the Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program as codified in Penal Code, section 14171 et al. and allocate a greater portion of the fund to Kings County. For the first time, the Kings County District Attorney’s Office will commit a full-time investigator to the Kings County Rural Crime Taskforce beginning in January 2023. In addition to adding an investigator, the Kings County District Attorney seeks to employ a victim-witness advocate to the Rural Crimes Task Force to gather documentation supporting victim restitution requests.

Create a new statutory scheme preventing the transportation, sale, and possession of fentanyl. Fentanyl is a highly addictive narcotic which risks injury or death to people who come into intended and unintended contact with the toxic substance. Fentanyl transportation and sales create a risk for law enforcement agents who attempt to apprehend narcotics dealers and confiscate controlled substances laced with fentanyl.

Advocate any legislation that will create funding for the local District Attorney's office for additional and more efficient use of office space.

KINGS COUNTY FIRE

Support legislation that increases staffing and addresses critical equipment and infrastructure needs. As the County continues to grow it is imperative to grow the current infrastructure to meet those needs.

Support any new regulation as it pertains to solar battery storage facilities. These new facilities have the potential to become hazmat situations if a fire occurs. Currently, there is no regulations placed on the facilities to mitigate this risk.

Support funding for the development of an Emergency Operations Center and a mobile capability.

INMATE DETENTIONS

Inmate Rehabilitation, Care, and Re-Entry

Appropriate adult criminal justice facilities that meet inmates' needs relative to space for programming, education, treatment, and medical and mental health care must remain a priority to support the mission and needs of our state and local criminal justice system, especially post-realignment. We must continue efforts to maximize funding for inmate medical and mental health care services, as well as assisting with continuity of care post-release and pursuing funding for increased needs resulting from realignment. We will continue to mitigate liabilities in areas such as health, mental health, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other areas of legal concern. We will pursue and support additional opportunities for participation in regional and jail-based competency restoration programs.

Support legislation that expands Medi-Cal eligibility and managed care programs to allow counties to receive federal financial participation for medical services performed for adult and juvenile inmates that occur on the grounds of the correctional institute.

Support legislation that would mitigate the County's risk exposure in such areas as health, mental health, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in managing inmate populations.

Support efforts to maximize funding for inmate medical and mental health care services, as well as assisting with continuity of care post-release and pursuing funding for increased needs resulting from realignment. Support funding for outdoor recreation, family transitional space, and job training.

PROBATION

Stabilization of SB 678 funding (currently frozen) still needs to be an incentive based system, but priority shift from prison commitments, as they have lessened state-wide difficult for counties to continue to show improvement based on this metric.

Continued funding for locals in their efforts to implement SB 823: i.e., facility upgrades, retro-fitting facilities to provide "home-like" environments as mandated by statute, funding for program enhancement, educational opportunities, and vocational educational opportunities both online and on site.

GENERAL SERVICES

ASSESSOR

Support legislation to assist Counties who are impacted by the large-scale solar tax exclusion.

Support legislation that increases water to Kings County. The lack of water and restrictions are having a significant impact on farming, which is the county's largest industry.

Support legislation that maintains the property value and tax protections of Proposition 13 (adopted by California Voters in 1978) and oppose bills that would lower the existing two-thirds vote thresholds for local bonds and special taxes to 55%.

Oppose legislation that would increase property tax rates.

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Provide funding that will enable the program, as part of the social safety net, to reach unserved families and decrease child poverty. Support legislation that: facilitates family access to program services or removes barriers to access; increases or eases access to justice; and/or eases operational/administrative burdens. Preserve the ability of local agencies to maintain local control of the child support program. Expand sharing of information through local agency collaboration and automating data exchange between agencies to improve services to families. Support legislation that creates, enhances, or preserves the child support program's ability to use effective collection tools and methods.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Support any legislation that increases water to Kings County. Without water, wastewater, and storm drainage, there is no development. This impacts housing, commercial and retail development.

Support direct allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds to Kings County. If direct allocation to Kings County is not possible, then continued support for maintaining CDBG and HOME funding levels to the State, which would maintain funding opportunities for Kings County. Due to inflation many families are being priced out of owning a home without programs such as the County's First Time Home Buyer program.

Support State funding efforts for the increasingly complex General Plan update processes to remain current and in compliance with State mandated General Plan requirements. Small counties have limited staff and due to time constraints are limited in order to stay compliant. Increased funding can ensure these General Plan requirements set by the Office of Planning and Research are met.

Support legislation that would provide a financing mechanism to mitigate the cost impacts of hosting solar farms within the County and that has water recharge as part of the development.

COUNTY CLERK/RECORDER

Oppose any new unfunded mandates coming from the State for implementation of new programs as a result of proposed laws.

Support funding of digital access, with multi-level security, for record requests.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support efforts to recruit healthcare workers to the Central Valley and Kings County. The need has always been here,

but it is exacerbated by the effects of the current pandemic. The pandemic has shown the fragility of the healthcare system and the need to reform the recruitment of qualified personnel. Expand educational programs to educate existing staff.

With the elimination of Redevelopment Agencies and the Enterprise Zone, counties and cities with high unemployment and high poverty rates find it more difficult to compete for business expansion and location with more affluent areas. Therefore, it is imperative to support and push for an Enterprise Zone equivalent to assist smaller counties. Disadvantaged communities are unable to afford the public infrastructure needed to create the jobs to boost or sustain growth within their economies. A targeted incentive package aimed at cities or counties that have an average unemployment rate and poverty level of 125% of the statewide average for the preceding year is needed. These designated zones would allow a more advantageous new employee hiring credit as well as other economic development and public infrastructure incentives necessary to even the competitive field of business development. Support the Incentivization of the use of new market tax credits to put people to work.

Oppose more stringent regulations that will cost county jobs. Oppose any new state policy that encourages people not to work.

Support legislation and funding programs that would increase and expand job training opportunities within the County, including funding at local community colleges to train and educate residents, especially for jobs within the tech industry both online and on site.

Support a more balanced approach to energy development. Pursuing an all-electric state ignores the consequences of overly developing renewable energy at the expense of oil, natural gas, green diesel, and hydrogen. This will have a detrimental effect on the state's economy.

Support effective water storage to help deficits during times of drought. Agriculture cannot thrive unless it has adequate water supply.

LIBRARY SERVICES

As California's Leading Library Advocate, the California Library Association (CLA) actively promotes and protects library interests by advocating for policies and funding that support libraries and their stakeholders.

Seek a measure supporting the infrastructure needs of California's public library facilities to benefit Californians in communities throughout the state. Work with the Legislature, the Governor's office, and other partners to secure a place on the election ballot and a plan for approval. Support legislative efforts which would reduce the voter approval requirement for local taxes and bonds from a 2/3rds vote to 55% for purposes of authorizing and issuing local infrastructure bonds.

Advocate to secure funding for the maximum grant amount of \$100 million for the Kings County Library as part of the Governor's "California Comeback Plan/Infrastructure Program. Encourage the State Librarian to waive the required dollar-for-dollar local match. Support funding for the California Library Services Act to foster resource sharing among libraries in rural areas. Support continued funding for "Lunch at the Library" to promote summer reading programs. Continue to support funding allocations for JobNow, VetNow, and LearnNow for economic recovery and education for vulnerable populations. Support the continued funding for Zip Books.

PUBLIC GUARDIAN

Support an increase in spending on Public Guardian programs. County Public Guardian programs are the only major county safety net programs that receive no direct State or Federal funding. Working collaboratively with local medical, mental health, social services, and justice providers. Support expanding the availability of senior and disabled adult placement across California. Expand the availability of psychiatric placements across California.

Opposed Unfunded mandated services; Expanding the scope of the Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act through changes to the definition of grave disability, which would burden the operation of county PG/PC operations; Amending the LPS Act in any manner that would limit the discretionary decision-making ability of Public Guardian/Public Conservator programs or restrict due process protections of individuals with serious mental illness.

PUBLIC WORKS | RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Support state investments into diversion programs to assist in addressing unfunded mandates. Most recently, the county will need support with the implementation of the organics management programs. There will be increased costs to waste pickup due to these new laws. Continue to work with Cal Recycle and legislators to address the challenges associated with single-use products and the impact these products have on the solid waste industry. Support an increase in resource recovery infrastructure to manage the mandates imposed by the state. Support market development before separating products from waste stream to make sure there is a market for them.

PUBLIC WORKS | TRANSPORTATION REFORM

Explore Road User Charge Policy Options. Work with other responsible agencies on mileage-based user charges as an eventual replacement for the gasoline excise tax. As improvements in the fuel efficiency of vehicles reduces gas tax revenue per mile traveled and inflation continues to erode the purchasing power of the excise tax revenues, alternatives to the gas tax must be seriously considered by all transportation stakeholders.

Protect State Transportation Funding and Promote Streamlining. Monitor the allocation of state transportation revenues to counties and oppose any effort to use transportation revenues outside their intended purposes. Proactively seek additional flexibility for counties and streamline project delivery and environmental review processes.

Support California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining for projects including the infrastructure necessary to support developments. Support fish and game and other agencies' approval of needed maintenance in waterways and roadways.

Recycled Materials Standards for Local Roadways. Support efforts that promote adoption of specifications allowing the use of recycled material when sufficient local flexibility is provided. Identify opportunities to support the use of recycled materials for maintaining and rehabilitating streets and highways with appropriate exceptions based on local conditions. Oppose policies that impose overly prescriptive requirements related to the use of recycled materials.

State Route 198 (SR198) is the interregional roadway connecting the Central Coast to the San Joaquin Valley, as such, improvement of this corridor from Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore to Interstate 5 (I-5) is a priority for Kings County to increase auto and truck traffic safety. Elevate SR198's priority into the State's Strategic Plan as it is considered part of the State Interregional Transportation system. The improved corridor will also serve communities like Coalinga and Huron to the statewide passenger rail network. The connection to San Joaquin – Amtrak rail system would be a benefit to rural communities in the region. The route is not only part of the Central Coast and San Joaquin Valley East-West connection, the highway also serves NAS Lemoore to I-5. Most of the improvement projects on SR198 are outside Kings County jurisdiction, however the needs of the county would be greatly served by improving this travel corridor.

Support State funding for widening and safety improvements for State Routes 33, 41, 43 and 198 in order to accommodate the growing need of transportation options within the County due to increasing traffic as a result of population growth within the Central Valley. Change these from "orphan" highways into priority highways. With the search for affordable housing and future completion of the High-Speed Rail Project, the Central Valley will be an ideal place to live, enticing migration to the area. Support funding that would increase public transportation support to evolve with new and future demands.

Truck traffic for Farm to Market transportation and freight movement from I-5 to NAS Lemoore should be a state priority. The passenger car traffic would also improve with an increase to State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) projects eligibility if this route becomes a higher priority. The truck volume due to the recent drought and future land retirement in Westlands Water District will see reduced seasonal agricultural demands automobile travelers will increase with additional personnel added to NAS Lemoore.

The Stockton Diamond is the busiest, most congested at-grade railway junction in California, and is a viable connection to the Central Valley. Kings County supports all improvements projects for the Stockton Diamond railway. Double and triple tracking projects of the railway system will increase mobility.

VETERANS SERVICES

Support legislation that would focus on getting homeless veterans off the streets and into housing, including transitional and permanent supportive housing.

Mental health treatment to veterans in need; support in providing adequate mental health treatment regardless of their status; VA will treat any veteran – prior, they would only provide treatment to veteran’s who were honorably discharged; if you have a dishonorable or bad conduct, you will not get treatment.

Support legislation that would continue to support expansion of veterans’ treatment courts to more counties by providing state funding of veterans’ treatment courts in California.

ADMINISTRATION

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Support legislative efforts, which would reduce the voter approval requirement for local taxes and bonds from a 2/3rd vote to 55% for purposes of authorizing and issuing local infrastructure bonds and public safety tax increases. Seek and support bond funding for the construction of new or the renovation of existing public libraries and criminal justice facilities. The County tried twice in 2016 to pass a local public safety tax. The results were close, but a 2/3 supermajority is insurmountable.

Support funding for local parks in underserved communities to provide safe locations for the recreation of children and families. Notably, Armona has a local park in need of rehabilitation such as adequate lighting, proper leveling of grounds and fields for safe recreation, and basketball court additions. Such funding efforts will provide underserved communities with safe environments for children and families to play.

COUNTY COUNSEL

Support legislation that would allow local government full cost recovery when responding to Public Records Act requests.

Consistent with CSAC policy within its County Platform on addressing issues of local concern related to tort reform, government should not be more liable than private parties and in some cases, there is reason for government to be less liable than private parties:

- a. Support proposals to mitigate the effects of joint and several liabilities upon public entities by limiting liability to any party to be responsible for their own proportion of damages.

- b. Support proposals to strengthen the statutory immunities associated with the operation of public infrastructure such as immunities under Government Code Section 830 et seq.
- c. Support proposals that limit post judgment interest and/or that provide public entities with the flexibility in paying judgments over time.
- d. Support proposals to mitigate the effects of liability upon public entities by applying the Doctrine of Comparative Fault to inverse condemnation actions.

ELECTIONS OFFICE

Support changes to the current state law that would reduce the early voting days from 10 to 3, to NOT include Election Day.

Support revenue sources that provide funding relief to local election officials, current code does not allow for election officials to “charge back” for Federal and State races.

Support the amendment to AB 2608, specifically to remove the requirement of a “California Replacement Vote-By-Mail Ballot Application” when the voter is requesting a ballot replacement due to have not received a vote-by-mail ballot for the identified election, or if received that ballot but that ballot has been lost or destroyed.

FINANCE

Support efforts to provide any COVID relief from the federal government directly to the County, bypassing the state clearinghouse.

Oppose legislation that would place any unfunded mandates upon the County and support the full cost recovery of State unfunded mandates. Oppose any deferred payments from the State to the County.

Support legislation, which is designed to ensure that taxes and fees collected in the State Highway Account are used to repair the State’s crumbling streets, highways, and roads, and ensure that the taxes and fees collected are not used for other purposes.

HIGH SPEED RAIL

Continue to work with the High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) to construct and deploy all HSRA projects in Kings County. Advocate for the highest safety standards in the transportation industry. Also, ensure all transportation modes work collectively to meet the needs of public transportation. Support any bills that require financial accountability. Continue to advocate for a High-Speed Rail maintenance facility within Kings County.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Support public agencies in implementation and compliance of continuing changes to labor laws, leave laws, and other employment law regulations. Suspend continued minimum wage increases, which are having an extreme impact to our local economies and pay structures. Support funding sources and other resources for employers to develop and implement training for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Support efforts to bring broadband to all citizens of Kings County. Support an increase in Information Technology security funding. Support permanent broadband subsidies for low-income residents. Support the establishment of a

security operations center at the State to assist smaller counties and cities to maintain security in their systems.

VIDEO RECORDING & RETENTION

Amend Government Code Section 26202.6, which governs the retention of video recordings that are made for “routine monitoring” purposes, so that recordings are only needed to be retained for 60-90 days versus the one-year requirement now. Annual retention of routine monitoring is extremely costly for counties and is discouraging the use of video cameras in various operations.

2024 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM – KINGS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

This document offers summary information on several key policy areas for legislative and/or regulatory action and monitoring in the current year.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT RESILIENCY

With nearly 92 percent of its land in agricultural use, much of Kings County's economy is based on agribusiness. Accordingly, when farmers are unable to obtain water to produce crops, laborers cannot find work, which leads to an unemployment rate in Kings County that is well above the state and national average in times of drought. The result is that neither essential component of our county's workforce can conduct business and contribute to our local economy. Prolonging the planning of or delaying funding for water storage/reservoir/hydropower projects is counterproductive to the demands that population growth places upon our region, as well as our state. Bringing desperately needed water to our communities is essential.

Kings County supports long-term, meaningful solutions to California's complex water management challenges, including legislative proposals and regulatory actions that would ensure more reliable and predictable water deliveries to the Central Valley.

Specifically, Kings County supports reauthorizing the 2016 *Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act*, which expired in 2021. The California title of the WIIN Act provides flexibility to capture and store water when flows are high with little impact on the environment. This flexibility helps California better prepare for future dry years. The WIIN Act also included nearly \$1 billion for environmental restoration and water infrastructure projects in California. This funding provides a diverse package of tools to meet the state's water needs.

Finally, while long-term drought continues to negatively impact Kings County agriculture, it also affects operations at United States Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore. During times of severe drought, fallow fields surrounding the air base attract rodents and other varmints, which, in turn, leads to a significant increase in the presence of avian predators. The result is a corresponding increase in bird strikes, which puts our nation's air fleet and security at severe risk.

WATER

Kings County supports efforts to enhance existing surface water storage facilities, as well as construct new storage facilities within the state. California is subject to variable weather patterns and must plan ahead to capture water in times of excess to meet the state's various water demands in times of drought. Without adequate surface water storage infrastructure, the county is dangerously reliant upon groundwater. As the state continues to move towards regulating the extraction of groundwater to ensure basins are sustainable and as drought conditions continue, surface water storage becomes paramount in ensuring the health and prosperity of our county. Without increased water storage, the demands placed on our water resources will impact the production of food and fiber, urbanized growth, energy needs, social determinants of health for our most vulnerable populations, and habitat restoration. Surface water storage also provides immediate relief to aquifers and helps facilitate groundwater recharge projects and sustainability, which will be vital to meeting the State's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

Kings County continues to have significant concerns with efforts aimed at defining the scope of waterways that are subject to federal regulatory oversight under the *Clean Water Act*. In response to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Sackett v. EPA* decision, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in September

2023 finalized a rule intended to define “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) in a manner that would provide regulatory clarity to impacted stakeholders. Despite this intent, the latest EPA-Corps rule is expected to face a series of legal challenges, thus perpetuating the longstanding uncertainty that local governments, water districts, farmers, homeowners, private property owners, manufacturers, and small businesses have faced with respect to jurisdictional determinations under the *Clean Water Act*.

The County supports efforts to amend the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) and other environmental laws in a manner that will increase the allocation to Central Valley Project water contractors, and opposes any legislation that negatively impacts such contractual allocations. The County believes these efforts need to be closely coordinated with state agencies to ensure that any amendments to the ESA do not result in increased burdens to the State Water Contractors. Because of ESA-related court rulings and ongoing historic drought conditions, water has become extremely limited in Kings County and groundwater levels are at historic lows. The County supports changes to the ESA that take into account the intra-species similarities when adding new animals as endangered species.

Kings County is engaged in a critical review of SGMA Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) implementation. The County will continue to support efforts to implement solutions to protect the County’s supply of surface and groundwater and to improve County and regional economic and agricultural opportunities.

The County supports efforts to properly manage the forest in the Sierra Nevada to ensure the conditions in the forest do not adversely impact the County’s groundwater supply, as the snowpack and subsequent forest runoff are vital to the County’s groundwater supply. As the forest continues to be overgrown, less water reaches the Valley floor due to evaporation and it is not able to help recharge the county’s groundwater basins.

Finally, the County supports grants and other federal funding opportunities or legislative proposals that help disadvantaged communities in Kings County improve access to a safe and reliable water supply.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Kings County supports increased funding for public health programs and initiatives to continue building local public health capacity to combat and control communicable diseases. Additional ongoing resources are needed to ensure adequate public health planning, workforce, testing and vaccine supplies, and alternative care capacity to appropriately respond to any local, state, or global health emergency. Reliable funding is critical to preparedness for a prompt, coordinated, and comprehensive response to new and re-emerging infectious diseases.

FEE-TO-TRUST REFORM/TRIBAL GAMING

Kings County supports federal legislation, as well as regulatory changes in the current fee-to-trust process, that would provide an incentive for counties and tribes to enter into judicially enforceable agreements when tribes are permitted to engage in economic development activities, including gaming. Agreements should fully mitigate local impacts from a tribal government’s business activities and fully identify the governmental services to be provided by the county to that tribe. In cases in which a county and tribe are unable to reach a local mitigation agreement, federal legislation/ regulations should require the Secretary of the Interior to certify that all anticipated off- reservation impacts have been mitigated to the maximum extent practicable. The County is supportive of reforms that would protect the County’s interests and account for any impacts on natural resources in case of a possible future expansion or new development.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Kings County opposes legislation that would prohibit a political subdivision from receiving federal justice and/or homeland security grant funding based on noncompliance with the terms of Federal immigration law (including, but not exclusively, 8 USC Section 1373) if such noncompliance is a consequence of being required to abide by the terms of a statute or other legal requirement of a State with jurisdiction over that political subdivision.

The County also supports legislation and appropriations for County efforts directed at: programs that recognize the extent of the gang and narcotics problems in our County and in the San Joaquin Valley; prevention programs that educate youth about drugs and gangs; treatment programs; and tougher penalties for illegal-drug related crimes.

Due to cuts in the appropriation for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), along with an increasing number of jurisdictions applying for the program, Kings County's SCAAP allocation has fluctuated in recent years. SCAAP partially reimburses Kings County for the significant costs of incarcerating undocumented criminals. The County supports legislation that would reauthorize and provide adequate funding for SCAAP.

The County supports legislation that provides funding for local public safety programs, including Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and for school resource deputies in rural counties. The COPS Hiring Grant program supports up to 75 percent of an officer or deputy for three years. The maximum federal share per officer is \$125,000 over a three-year period (not \$125,000 per year). Following the grant period, agencies must retain each funded position for a minimum of 12 months. Kings County supports increasing the maximum level of funding per officer and increasing the number of years covered by the grant.

Kings County supports legislation that provides funding, including grant opportunities, which target prevention, response, and recovery efforts for disasters in addition to disaster preparedness, resiliency, and response programs. This includes the SAFER grant program, which provides discretionary funding to recruit, retain, and hire firefighters, as well as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, which helps fund critically needed resources to equip and train emergency personnel. Similarly, the County supports legislation that reauthorizes, streamlines, and improves access to Federal Emergency Management Administration grant programs and support.

Kings County will work closely with the Sheriff's Office to support federal funding opportunities that would provide additional resources to aid in law enforcement efforts, including the purchase of vehicles and ongoing support for the Body Worn Camera program.

The County has a \$20 plus million inmate transitional housing construction project in preliminary drawings for transitional housing for inmates within 90 days of release, which needs funding.

Kings County supports providing Medicaid/Medicare/Medi-Cal reimbursement for services provided to justice-involved individuals who are in county custody pending disposition of their case.

Pursuant to Section 1905(a)(A) of the *Social Security Act*, juveniles and adults housed in detention facilities are denied federal health benefits even though they are presumed innocent under the Constitution. This policy – often referred to as the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP) – disrupts the provision of primary and behavioral health care and also makes it difficult to establish any continuity of care prior to release.

Kings County supports efforts that would improve care coordination for individuals suffering from mental health, substance use and/or other chronic health conditions by allowing Medicaid payment for medical services furnished to an incarcerated individual during the 30-day period preceding the individual's release and allowing pretrial detainees to receive Medicaid benefits at the option of the state. Additionally, the County supports legislation that would remove limitations on other federal benefits – such as Medicare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits – for pre-trial inmates of jails, detention centers, and prisons.

Providing pre-trial detainees and incarcerated individuals with access to federal health benefits would improve care coordination, decrease short-term costs to local taxpayers and long-term costs to the federal government. This change in policy also would reduce recidivism caused or exacerbated by untreated mental illness and/or substance use disorders, thereby improving public safety.

Kings County supports providing additional federal support for the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), including enhanced support for mail security. Kings County residents rely on the Postal Service for deliveries of prescription medications and other vital medical supplies, as well as mail-in ballots, and other essential items.

Finally, Kings County also supports a conviction of a felony, higher federal fines, and prison sentences for crimes involving mail and delivery thefts from USPS, Amazon, UPS, FedEx, and other package carriers. Mail and delivery theft has been on the rise in recent years, and the County is concerned about a more pronounced uptick in stolen mail and packages during the pandemic.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS/INTEROPERABILITY/BROADBAND

Kings County supports funding for first responder infrastructure upgrades and/or repair, such as repeater site restoration and upgrades. Dedicated funding has not been set aside since 2007 with the Public Safety Interoperability Communications grant, and systems are aging with no replacement funds in sight. Categorical funding, such as Homeland Security funding, is allocated in one-time amounts that are not sufficient to completely convert our local systems.

The County also supports implementation of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program grants. Communities and outlying areas are in great need of broadband infrastructure to bring and enhance much needed services in the area of education, public safety, economic development, and for medical purposes. Broadband connection rates need to be reasonable in order to be competitive for local government use.

Likewise, Kings County supports funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide reliable and affordable high-speed internet e-Connectivity, which is fundamental for economic activity throughout the United States. Access to high-speed internet is vital for a diverse set of industries, including agricultural production, manufacturing, and acts as a catalyst for rural prosperity by enabling efficient, modern communications between rural American households, schools, and healthcare centers as well as markets and customers around the world.

The County also supports legislative efforts to maintain current levels of funding for the implementation of universal service and library connectivity discount provisions E-Rate (*Telecommunications Act of 1996*, allowing any communications business to compete in any market against any other).

Kings County supports the deployment and availability of emerging technologies, such as small cell 5G, to rural areas of the nation to ensure equitable economic and educational opportunities for all. By preserving the long-standing, existing local zoning authorities of counties and other local governments in the deployment process, Kings County can ensure that the public interest is being served by communications providers regardless of the delivery platform. County officials can also fulfill their responsibilities as trustees of public property and as protectors of public safety and welfare during this deployment process.

The County also supports local decision-making and accountability, and opposes actions that would preempt or limit the zoning and siting authority of local governments. For example, Kings County supports legislative efforts that would nullify the Federal Communication Commission's 2018 wireless infrastructure rule (*83 Fed Reg. 51867*). Among other things, the Commission's rule preempts local government authority to regulate 5G deployments by restricting the timeframes for the review of small-cell applications and places limitations on the level of

compensation that localities can receive from siting the technology.

Kings County supports programs, like the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Programs, that provide federal funding to local governments to address cybersecurity risks.

HUMAN SERVICES

Kings County supports federal Title IV-E reform to eliminate the linkage between Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) 1996 eligibility requirements and the Title IV-E Federal payments for Foster Care. All children served by the Child Welfare System or placed in Foster Care should be eligible for Federal Title IV-E funding. Currently, 470 youth are served by the Kings County Child Welfare System; of those 375 are placed in out of home care. While the county is legally obligated to pay for placement and services costs for all of these kids, approximately 35% of children are not eligible for federal funding and therefore are fully funded with local funds. This is due to a requirement that federal reimbursement is only available for kids whose families meet the 1996 AFDC program eligibility. As a result, there is an annual cost shift of approximately \$2.7 Million from Federal government to the County that negatively impacts the County's ability to meet its basic obligation to this population or to provide other basic safety services.

Support retaining the entitlement nature of the Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs and eliminate outdated rules that base the child's eligibility for such support on parental income and circumstances.

Support amendments to the *Family First Prevention Services Act* (FFPSA) to better align the FFPSA with California's Continuum of Care Reform initiatives and prevention services provided by the state, including the provisions in the enacted 2019 Family First Transition Act.

Support change in regulation or legislation a provision to exempt Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) from the Institution for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion, which prohibits Medicaid reimbursement in facilities of more than 16 beds.

Support increased federal funding for services and income support needed by parents seeking to reunify with their children in foster care.

Support increased federal funding to recruit, retain and support foster families.

Support legislative or regulatory changes to allow for virtual visits via Zoom or other secure virtual platforms with non-minor youth in the extended foster care program when the youth is attending college or living in another state or out of country as an alternative to monthly, in-person visits.

Oppose efforts to reduce or block grant federal funding for Medicaid/Medi-Cal administration or benefits, including efforts to place a per-capita cap on funding, or limiting the ability of states to leverage funds through assessments on providers or use of intergovernmental transfers or certified public expenditures as a financial match for Medicaid.

Support increased appropriations for the Elder Justice Act to support state and county adult protective service programs.

Support federal homelessness legislation designed to fund an array of services to individuals and families at risk of, or who are experiencing homelessness. On a related matter, Kings County has a number of outstanding claims related to emergency, non-congregate sheltering (NCS) tied to the COVID-19 disaster declaration. While all claims prior to June 11, 2021, allowed for the reimbursement of all COVID-related housing costs, FEMA later clarified its policy to limit reimbursable NCS stays to 20 days during the period of June 11, 2021 – coinciding with the end of Governor Newsom's Stay at Home order – through May 11, 2023 (end of the federal COVID disaster declaration). It should be noted that FEMA did not clarify its policy until October 16, 2023. Kings County supports efforts to overturn this

decision and continue FEMA's original policy.

With regard to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, Kings County supports increased federal funding and support for TANF/CalWORKs subsidized employment programs and for the ability of states to provide and receive federal support for vocational education and career technical training for longer than 12 months.

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Kings County supports Child Support as a social safety net for children and parents by providing adequate funding to local child support services programs to help support family financial stability. The County supports the following: provide funding that will enable the program, as part of the social safety net, to reach unserved families and decrease child poverty. Support legislation that: facilitates family access to program services or removes barriers to access; increases or eases access to justice; and/or eases operational/administrative burdens. Preserve the ability of local agencies to maintain local control of the child support program. Expand sharing of information through local agency collaboration and automating data exchange between agencies to improve services to families. Support legislation that creates, enhances, or preserves the child support program's ability to use effective collection tools and methods.

HEALTH & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Kings County supports a varied policy agenda addressing the prevention of chronic disease and promotion of wellness. Specifically, the County supports:

- a dedicated federal funding stream to fund preventive health services or activities that improve community health outcomes for public health prevention and wellness, including necessary staffing and administrative oversight;
- flexibility for California to design prevention programs to take advantage of California's state and local health department strengths and encourage the provision of equitable base funding to state and local health departments with additional funding available on a competitive basis;
- improvement of nutrition, obesity and fitness education programs, as well as health literacy in California's population;
- an increase in access to healthy foods and a decrease in access to unhealthy foods and beverages; and,
- a reduction in food insecurity.

Kings County supports legislation that would enhance the provision of emergency and/or trauma services and increased funding for the various components of emergency and trauma care systems, including operations, equipment, infrastructure, ancillary services, public health interventions, and physician reimbursements.

Kings County supports efforts that would ensure that any potential reforms of health and welfare entitlement programs do not shift additional cost burdens from the federal government or state to the counties.

The County opposes efforts to reduce state and federal funding streams, which would shift costs to local health departments.

The County also opposes any effort to reduce or divert funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF). The PPHF, which was created by Section 4002 of the *Affordable Care Act*, is the nation's first mandatory funding stream dedicated to improving our nation's public health, enabling local health departments to augment, expand, or create chronic disease programs addressing community needs.

The County supports Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) waivers expanding Medicaid payments for housing and CMS's exploration of payment models to allow Medicaid reimbursement for beneficiary housing

costs. Historically, Medicaid has paid for ancillary and supportive services but not for direct housing costs like rent. The County supports a federal change in Medicaid statute to subsidize housing costs for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Finally, Kings County supports legislation and/or federal budget actions that would expand the availability of supportive housing that provides coordinated services for County residents.

MILITARY & VETERANS CODE

Kings County supports legislation that would provide increased access for County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) to Veterans Affairs (VA) information systems (i.e., Veterans Benefits Management System, Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System, Modern Award Processing - Development, etc.) for use in developing and monitoring claims submitted on behalf of veterans. County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) are local government agencies responsible for assisting veterans, their dependents, and their survivors in obtaining benefits to which they may be entitled. As such, CVSOs need maximum possible access, regardless of VA Power-of-Attorney (POA), to VA client and claims databases. Enhancing this access would result in better and timelier services to claimants and reduce the workload in VA call centers.

The County supports legislative, regulatory, and/or policy changes that would create a federal/state/local government partnership to reduce the VA veteran's claims backlog and expand outreach services to veterans. VA has expressed the belief that one important way to reduce the unacceptable claims backlog is the initial submission of more fully completed claims packages. Individual claimants are unfamiliar with the requirements of the VA claims system.

Accordingly, it is necessary to have competent, trained intermediaries, such as CVSO, participate in the preparation and submission of claims. Many CVSOs do not have the resources to do the community outreach that would enable them to reach the maximum possible number of benefit claimants. Federal/state/local partnerships will enable State and County veterans service programs to reach and assist more claimants thus helping to reduce the chronic VA claims backlog.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Kings County supports maximum funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Our County utilizes these program funds with increasing success - to improve unincorporated community infrastructure, provide better housing conditions, and enhance quality of life opportunities to Kings County residents. CDBG funding has been routinely used for first-time home buyers' loans since the late 1990's, as well as owner-occupied rehabilitation projects throughout the County since the mid-1970's. Having a local reserve of program income is crucial to the sustainability of the housing rehab program. Kings County supports legislation and funding opportunities that would allow flexible use of the CDBG program income for continued program costs without risking a non-entitled jurisdiction's eligibility for future grants. Alternatively, the County supports the creation of dedicated funding to support the continuance of housing rehabilitation programs to restore existing dilapidated housing to improve neighborhoods. Kings County also supports affordable home insurance options to support such developments.

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Kings County supports legislation and/or administrative action that would expand the eligibility requirements for USDA's Rural Development Communities Facilities programs. Specifically, the County supports increasing the population threshold used to determine whether communities are eligible for such grants and loans. Eligibility expansion should also exclude prison inmates from population thresholds.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) P R O G R A M S

Kings County supports full funding for local *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) programs, especially considering the recent business closures. Funding levels have not kept up with inflation for well over a decade. WIOA's business-led local effort, combined with the unique Economic Development/Workforce setup that Kings County enjoys, has resulted in a critical onramp to the local economy for effective change and growth. Reduced allocations limit the ability to provide this assistance to businesses, especially in years of economic turmoil.

TRANSPORTATION

Kings County supports legislation to restore Highway Trust Fund solvency in order to fund major programs important to Kings County. Pursuant to the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA: P.L. 117-58), options for stabilizing Highway Trust Fund revenues will be examined by a new Federal System Funding Alternative Advisory Board, which, among other things, will establish a pilot program to demonstrate the effectiveness of a national vehicle miles traveled (VMT) user fee.

Kings County also supports legislative efforts that would:

- prioritize formula over discretionary or competitive allocation to programs.
- ensure set asides for smaller Metropolitan Areas and Rural Areas as part of major programs.
- ensure set asides for Small Projects.
- maintain flexibility and authority for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).
- eliminate "new non-Federal Revenue" requirements or programs that rely on a substantial local match.
- add new funding mechanisms from a ten percent tax on bike tires and electric vehicle batteries and eliminate the fuel tax subsidy for transit.
- increase flexibility for states and local governments to improve their systems with multimodal infrastructure, including public transportation and rail, active transportation, and technology and system management.
- implement the exceptions to Buy America proposed previously by FHWA in Federal rulemaking and reinstate the waiver process to ensure transportation projects are progressing without significant delays. Additionally, Kings County supports developing clear guidelines on exceptions at the Federal level to create a consistent nationwide application of rules and reduce the burden, delays and resources expended over small percentages of materials.
- identify and quantify the most crucial elements of a pilot program for the next transportation bill to assist with maintaining those farm-to-market routes deemed crucial for interstate commerce.
- exempt the maintenance of existing public works facilities/infrastructure from permit requirements under the *Endangered Species Act*.
- reform the National Highway Freight Program to include eligibility more clearly for investment in integrated freight management solutions and freight safety programs, including for emergency responders.
- increase funding to enhance and sustain rail operations including the movement of freight within and through the County.

Kings County supports funding to assist with the movement of goods on State Route 198 (SR198). The County is a primary transportation and logistics corridor for California, connecting the major markets located in the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Most recently, site selectors have rated the California Central Valley as the #3-growth market in the nation. It is critical that infrastructure be updated to facilitate the future growth of this corridor to accommodate this growth. Highway 198 is a major artery connecting the North/South logistics routes represented by I-5 and Highway 99, and provides direct logistical support to essential defense infrastructure at NAS Lemoore. Widening

approximately 20 miles of SR198 will assist with goods movement to NAS Lemoore, as well as the Central Valley of California.

Kings County supports any move by NAS Lemoore to expand additional runway construction to support the aging airstrips currently being used. This is due to the addition of F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadrons.

Finally, Kings County supports implementation of an environmental reciprocity program that would allow the State of California and local transportation agencies to conduct environmental reviews and make approvals for transportation projects under State environmental laws and regulations instead of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA).

TAX EXEMPT BONDS

Kings County supports efforts to protect the municipal bond and private activity bonds (PAB) tax exemption, as well as legislation that would restore the exemption for advance refunding bonds.

Municipal bonds and PABs are critical financing tools used by state and local governments to finance public capital improvements and public infrastructure projects, which are essential for creating jobs, sustaining economic growth, and improving the quality of life for Americans in every corner of this country. Because investors are not required to pay federal income tax on interest earned from most bonds issued by state and local governments, localities ultimately receive a lower interest rate on their borrowing than they would if their interest were taxable to investors.

The 2017 tax reform law fully preserves the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds and PABs. However, it eliminated the tax exemption for advance refunding bonds, which counties use to refinance outstanding bonds to take advantage of better terms and rates.

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM & LIBRARY SERVICES

Kings County supports the continuation of federal funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which administers the Library Services Technology Act (LSTA). LSTA grants are awarded by the California State Library to eligible local libraries, including the Kings County Library.

The County supports policies that maintain robust and stable funding levels for the E-rate program, a significant source of support for library technology needs. In addition, the Board supports legislation and policies that aim to improve access to the E-rate program and empower libraries to provide online opportunities for all Americans. Finally, the County supports continued efforts of the FCC to make the E-rate application process and other E-rate processes fast, simple, and efficient.

Kings County supports funding to repair and construct modern library facilities in underserved and disadvantaged communities, including recent legislation, the *Build America's Libraries Act*, which would provide significant funds to repair, modernize, and construct library facilities. The bill would enable libraries to better serve rural, low-income, and underserved areas, as well as people with disabilities and other vulnerable library users. This funding could be used to address the over \$10 million dollar facility modernization Library within the County. In addition, the funding would allow facilities to take measures that reduce the risk of spreading communicable diseases and mitigate vulnerability to natural disasters.

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

Kings County supports efforts to improve food security and augment federal investments in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The County opposes efforts to block grant, or otherwise limit the federal contribution to SNAP/CalFresh. The County supports increased federal funding for SNAP Employment and Training (E&T). The County opposes lifetime bans on SNAP/CalFresh assistance for ex-felons who have served their prison sentence. The County opposes federal mandates to require states to increase SNAP/CalFresh work requirements. The County supports legislation and removing regulatory barriers to expand SNAP/CalFresh eligibility for students enrolled at institutions of higher education.

The County supports increasing access to healthy foods through vouchers such as through USDA's fresh fruit and vegetable program.

Kings County supports continued funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The WIC program ensures access to adequate nutrition for pregnant women and children ages 0-5, and provides nutrition education for parents so that their child/children can have a healthy start. There are currently over 8,000 participants who meet the income criteria for eligibility for this program in Kings County.

AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

Kings County supports legislation that increases access to the Head Start program and to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning programs.

Childcare is essential to economic recovery and development. For families to continue to work, the fragile childcare infrastructure must be bolstered. In California, many families no longer qualify for the Head Start program due to its insufficient income eligibility standards and the rising minimum wage. Access to federally funded childcare programs must match the conditions Kings County families are experiencing. Legislation to broaden eligibility and access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early learning programs, and increase childcare workers' compensation and professional development opportunities, is needed.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Kings County supports legislation that will expand the Family Medical Leave Act definition of family relationships to be consistent with that of the state's family medical leaves to avoid the duplication of leaves.

ELECTIONS

Kings County supports legislation that will fund elections infrastructure to enable adequate compliance of current state and federal codes.