



4.21.21

The Honorable Cecilia M. Aguiar-Curry
Chair, Assembly Committee on Local Government
California State Capitol, Room 5144
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 339 (Lee): Public Participation – As Amended 4/15 – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry:

The undersigned organizations are pleased to support of Assembly Bill 339, which will ensure Californians have the ability to participate in the local governmental decision-making process by expanding opportunities to join public meetings and make public comment via telephonic or internet-based service options, both during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill also provides greater clarification of existing legal standards for interpretation services and language access.

Many of our organizations work with communities that face impediments to participation in the government decision-making process. Most people are unable to take time from their jobs or other obligations during the day to participate in public meetings. For rural residents, people without access to transportation, people with disabilities, and seniors, commuting to public meetings is effectively impossible. In addition, the millions of Californians who speak a language other than English require interpretation services to adequately participate in public meetings conducted in English. These communities deserve a seat at the decision-making table and a voice in policy decisions that affect them, and it is the responsibility of the government to facilitate their participation. Our democracy functions best when everyone – not just those who already have power – is able to participate in the public process.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote meetings have provided a unique opportunity for Californians across the state to better participate in local government meetings. However, the pandemic has simultaneously illustrated how existing inequities such as lack of broadband access or language interpretation services create barriers that prevent many from accessing this opportunity. At the local level, there is a clear need for reforms that ensure that all Californians – regardless of their ability to attend meetings in-person or speak a language different than English – are able to participate in the governmental decision-making process.

AB 339 would enhance public participation by ensuring that constituents have opportunities to join and comment at public meetings in-person, via a telephonic option and via an internet-based service option. AB 339 would also establish standards for posting both agendas and instructions for joining meetings via teleconference technology in a timely manner and at an easily accessible location online. Finally, language interpretation services would be available to all who wish to attend and comment at public meetings.

Clearer standards that ensure the equitable access to public meetings are necessary to ensure a government that is accountable to all of its constituents, not just a select few. Our democracy cannot function unless everyone is able to participate equally - regardless of ability to travel, internet access, or language fluency. For all of these reasons, we proudly support AB 339 and we respectfully urge your “Aye” vote.

Sincerely,

Leadership Counsel for Justice &
Accountability (Sponsor)
ACLU California Action (Sponsor)
Abundant Housing LA
ACT for Women and Girls
Alianza Coachella Valley
Alliance for Children’s Rights
Alliance of Californians for Community
Empowerment (ACCE)
Arts for Healing and Justice Network
Business for Good San Diego
California Association of Nonprofits
California Children’s Trust
California Institute for Rural Studies
California News Publishers Association
California Teachers Association
California Work & Family Coalition
California YIMBY
Californians Aware: The Center for Public
Forum Rights
Californians for Justice
Californians for Pesticide Reform
CEJA Action
Center on Race, Poverty, and the
Environment

Central California Asthma Collaborative
Central California Environmental Justice
Network
Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Citizens for Choice Nevada County
Clean Water Action
Climate Action Campaign
ClimatePlan
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights
(CHIRLA)
Congregations Organized for Prophetic
Engagement
Courage CA
Cultiva La Salud
Culver City for More Homes
Dignity and Power Now
Dolores Huerta Foundation
Fairmead Community & Friends
Faith in the Valley
First Amendment Coalition
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Fresno Building Healthy Communities
Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce
GenerationUp
Gente Organizada

Greenbelt Alliance
Hammond Climate Solutions
Hmong Innovating Politics
Housing California
Housing Is A Human Right OC
INDIVISIBLE CA: Statestrong
INDIVISIBLE District 46
Inland Congregations United for Change
Inland Equity Partnership
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Jakara Movement
Jewish Family & Community Services East
Bay
Justice LA
La Defensa
League of Women Voters of CA
Los Angeles Sunshine Coalition
Mi Familia Vota
NAMI LA
NextGen CA
NOlympics LA
Nuestra Casa
Orange County Emergency Response
Coalition
Orange County Equality Coalition
Orange County LGBTQ Center
People's Budget OC

People for Housing OC
People's Collective for Environmental
Justice
People's Homeless Task Force OC
Pesticide Action Network
Planning and Conservation League
PolicyLink
Pomona Economic Opportunity Center
Public Advocates
Pueblo Unido CDC
Riverside NAACP
Root & Rebound
Senior & Disability Action
South County Homeless Task Force
Time for Change Foundation
TODEC Legal Center
Unite Here Local 11
United Food and Commercial Workers,
Western States Council
Voices for Progress
Western Center on Law & Poverty
White People 4 Black Lives
Women for: Orange County
Yalla Indivisible
YIMBY Action
Youth Justice Education Clinic, Loyola Law
School

cc: Members and Committee Staff, Assembly Committee on Local Government