





April 1, 2021

The Honorable Alex Lee  
California State Capitol, Room 2170  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 339 (Lee): Public Participation -  
SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Lee:

The undersigned organizations are pleased to support Assembly Bill 339, which seeks to ensure that all Californians have the ability to participate in governmental decision-making by expanding opportunities to join public meetings and make public comment at both the local level and the state legislature by telephone 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 and people without access to transportation, 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 both local and statewide government meetings. However, the pandemic has also illustrated how existing inequities such as lack of broadband access or language interpretation services create barriers that prevent many from accessing this opportunity. It has also highlighted the need for clear standards for remote participation that ensure that constituents are able to directly address their elected representatives. All Californians – regardless of their ability to attend meetings in-person or speak English – should be able to participate in the governmental decision-making process.

AB 339 would enhance public participation within local governments and the state legislature by ensuring that constituents have opportunities to join and comment at public meetings in-person, by telephone, and an internet-based service option. Additionally, language interpretation services would be available to all who wish to attend and comment at public meetings, and government bodies would have to have a system in place for requesting such services.

Clearer standards for equitable provision of access to public meetings are necessary to ensure a government that is accountable to all of its constituents. Our democracy cannot function unless everyone is able to participate equally - regardless of ability to travel, internet access, or language fluency. For all these reasons, we proudly support AB 339.

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  
California Children's Trust  
California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)  
California Institute for Rural Studies  
California Teachers Association  
California Work & Family Coalition  
California YIMBY  
Californians Aware  
Californians for Justice  
Californians for Pesticide Reform  
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  
ClimatePlan  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement  
Courage Campaign  
Cultiva La Salud  
Dignity and Power Now

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Disability Rights Legal Center  
Dolores Huerta Foundation  
Faith in the Valley  
Fairmead Community & Friends  
First Amendment Coalition  
Fresno Barrios Unidos  
Fresno Building Healthy Communities  
Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce  
GenerationUp  
Gente Organizada  
Greenbelt Alliance  
Hmong Innovating Politics  
Housing Is A Human Right OC  
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  
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

South County Homeless Task Force  
Time for Change Foundation  
TODEC Inland Empire  
Unite Here Local 11  
Voices for Progress  
White People 4 Black Lives  
Women for: Orange County  
Yalla Indivisible  
Youth Justice Education Clinic, Loyola Law  
School

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