November 11, 2026

The Honorable Dave Cortese
Senator, 15th District
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 9581

RE: Senate Bill 44, Rural Wildfire Reduction Act – Support

Dear Senator Cortese, Chair Limón, Vice Chair Strickland, and Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations,

On behalf of our member employers, the California Chamber of Commerce respectfully **supports** Senate Bill 44. SB 44 directs state wildfire grant programs to prioritize fuel reduction in rural areas at high risk of wildfire. It does this without placing any new taxes, fees, or requirements on employers.

Wildfire is an economic issue for employers. Rural wildfires force businesses to close, disrupt deliveries, displace workers, and raise insurance and utility costs. Agriculture, ranching, timber, and small-town businesses carry the most risk. Reducing fuel before a fire starts protects these employers and the communities their workers live in.

It focuses existing grant programs on the highest-risk areas. Section 1 adds Public Resources Code Section 4743(c)(13), which state entities "shall consider" when they write funding guidelines for vegetation management grants. SB 44 does not appropriate new money. It helps the dollars already available go where fire can spread fastest.

It uses practical methods and protects the places businesses depend on. Under paragraph (13), projects build fuel breaks, remove dead or dry vegetation, thin overgrown areas, and use prescribed burning or grazing. They prioritize areas near rural communities and evacuation routes, keep treated areas maintained, and limit unnecessary damage to native plants, habitat, and waterways.

Senate Bill 44 is a practical, low-cost step toward protecting rural communities and the businesses that support them. For these reasons, the California Chamber of Commerce supports SB 44 and respectfully urges the Committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Aishah Apalara

Aishah Apalara (She/Her/Hers) - Lobbyist

CalChamber