

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Bill Dodd, Chair

Senate Governmental Organization Committee

1020 N Street, Suite 584

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1152 (Limón) – Support

Dear Chair Dodd,

I am writing on behalf of the South Orange County Economic Coalition (SOCEC) Board of Directors to express our support for Senate Bill 1152 (Limón), a pivotal piece of legislation aimed at modernizing fire safety regulations to embrace the advancements in battery technology.

As South Orange County's leading voice of business, the South Orange County Economic Coalition is the driving force advocating for a strong local economy. Our organization covers a region that creates more than \$25 billion in economic activity annually. Therefore, it is our responsibility to advocate on behalf of local businesses for policies that positively impact the market environment in South Orange County and contribute to the prosperity and economic growth of the region.

California Public Utilities (PUC) requires all internet service providers to have backup power for 72 hours to their facilities in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High-Fire Threat Districts in California. Providers have worked hard to comply with this regulation, and it is our responsibility to advocate for policies that make it easier for providers to comply with and meet their legal obligations. SB 1152 does this by directing CAL FIRE to establish regulations allowing Broadband Companies to use lithium-based batteries, where appropriate, to comply with the current backup power requirements.

Lithium based batteries have become integral components in a wide range of industries, from consumer electronics to renewable energy systems. The evolution in battery technology, particularly lithium-based solutions, offers a significant leap forward by providing greater energy storage within a compact physical footprint suitable for right-of-way placements. Advancements in battery health, safety, and monitoring technology make this technology an ideal tool for internet service providers to meet their backup power requirements and offer a cleaner and more sustainable alternative for backup power.

Currently, PUC allows providers to use various backup power methodologies, including diesel and natural gas generators, while encouraging a gradual transition to renewable energy sources. Lithium batteries,

which have achieved significant technological advancement, present a cleaner and more sustainable alternative for backup power. This alternative aligns both with the broader goals of environmental stewardship and disaster preparedness.

SB 1152 also aligns the goal of facilitating the ability for wireline providers to comply with state regulations, particularly by providing an affordable and sustainable avenue for generating backup power. Further, by aligning these regulations with existing standards for lead-acid and nickel-cadmium batteries, the bill provides much-needed clarity and consistency for internet service providers operating in California. This lack of clarity and consistency must be addressed, and failing to do so threatens both public safety and the ability for internet service providers to conduct business freely.

SOCEC firmly supports SB 1152 and urges a favorable “Aye” vote on this legislation to enhance fire safety regulations, enable internet service providers to more easily comply with such regulations, and promote responsible and market-driven innovation in California.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Hernandez', written in a cursive style.

Victoria Hernandez

Executive Director

South Orange County Economic Coalition