



February 18, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker of the Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 219  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins  
Senate President pro Tempore  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFC) Budget Item – SUPPORT VIA EMAIL**

Dear President Pro-Tem Atkins and Speaker Rendon:

On behalf of the South Orange County Economic Coalition (Coalition), I am writing to express the Coalition's support for the proposed budget item for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program of the Department of Conservation in the California Resources Agency.

As south Orange County's leading voice of business, the South Orange County Economic Coalition is the driving force of advocating for a strong local economy. We focus on four key areas: Advocacy, Education, Representation and Progress for South Orange County issues, initiatives and projects. We support and encourage a streamlined government process. Representing hundreds of employees, we are an alliance of businesses, community thought-leaders and stakeholders committed to enhancing the region's economic vitality and protecting its exceptional quality of life.

COAST was convened by the Orange County Fire Authority in 2016 consistent with the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. The group is extremely diverse, but its common purpose is the urgent imperative to reduce the severity, frequency, spread, and impact of wildfires in our region.

The group has accomplished a number of important goals, including designation by NOAA/NWS of a dedicated Coastal weather zone for Orange County, the installation of a high-speed wireless network of fire cameras, weather stations, and virtual fire towers, deployment and expansion of a community Fire Watch Network, and the adoption of a comprehensive Community Wildfire Prevention Plan to advance the broader fire prevention agenda and projects in the region.

The most difficult challenges for our region remain, including reducing ignitions during high winds, maintaining defensible space around communities at risk, and hardening structures against fire impacts. We believe that the only way that these can be successfully solved is with



collaborative action by a broad range of stakeholders at the regional level. The RFFC program's goals are to support regional collaborations and develop leveraged, regionally appropriate actions to reduce the risk of wildfire.

For these reasons, the South Orange County Economic Coalition is pleased to support this critical budget item that supports regional collaborations like COAST. The RFFC program, does not currently include Orange County, and this budget item will help COAST realize its potential to prevent wildfire and keep communities safe. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Thomas".

Barbara J. Thomas  
Executive Director

Sincerely,

cc: Assembly Budget Chair Phil Ting  
Senate Budget Chair Nancy Skinner