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May 29, 2024

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 407
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 817 (Pacheco) Open Meetings: Teleconferencing: Subsidiary
Body. Notice of SUPPORT (As Amended 03/16/2024)**

Dear Senator Durazo,

The City of Brentwood is pleased to express our strong support for AB 817, which would remove barriers to entry in civic participation by aligning provisions for local advisory bodies with state advisory bodies, allowing these nondecision-making sub-bodies of a legislative governing body to participate remotely via two-way virtual teleconferencing without posting their location.

Challenges associated with recruitment have been attributed to participation time commitments, time and location of meetings, physical limitations, conflicts with childcare, and work obligations.

During the pandemic, public health precautions allowed for remote participation during public meetings, which resulted in increased accessibility and resident participation. Individuals who could not previously meet the time, distance, or mandatory physical participation requirements were able to become more engaged, increasing the diversity of input and thought on several critical community proposals.

Existing law (Stats. 1991, Ch. 669) requires local bodies to publish and publicly notice opportunities that exist to participate in and serve on local regulatory and advisory boards, commissions, and committees under the Local Appointments List, known as Maddy's Act. However, merely informing the public of the opportunity to engage is not enough: addressing barriers to entry to achieve diverse representation in leadership furthers the Legislature's declared goals of equal access and equal opportunity.

Diversification in civic participation at all levels requires careful consideration of different protected characteristics as well as socioeconomic status. The in-person requirement to participate in local governance bodies presents a disproportionate challenge for those with physical or economic limitations, including seniors, persons with disability, single parents, caretakers, economically marginalized groups, and those who live in rural areas and face

prohibitive driving distances. Participation in local advisory bodies and appointed boards and commissions often serves as a pipeline to local elected office and opportunities for state and federal leadership positions.

AB 817 would help address these issues by giving local advisory bodies the same teleconferencing flexibilities that state advisory bodies currently enjoy, so that equity in opportunity to serve locally and representative diversity in leadership can be achieved.

For these reasons, the City of Brentwood is pleased to support AB 817.

Sincerely,



Joel R. Bryant
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Assembly Member Blanca Pacheco, assemblymember.pacheco@assembly.ca.gov
Honorable Steven M. Glazer, Senator: senator.glazer@senate.ca.gov
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