California Legislature

June 4, 2020

The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6062
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Shirley Weber, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee 5
State Capitol, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anna Caballero, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee 4
State Capitol, Room 5052
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request to Include Preparedness Efforts in Funding for Emergencies

Dear Chairs Ting, Mitchell, Weber and Caballero:

As we look to a fall that will inevitably bring a second wave of COVID-19, wildfires, and Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events, it is now time to not only invest in response but also preparedness. I am writing to request that any funding allocated in response to state and local emergencies to allow for spending on preparedness efforts.

There have been 30 Presidential major disaster declarations in the State of California since 2003, yet local government resources dedicated to emergency resilience, management, preparedness, and readiness have progressively diminished. Local governments need reliable statewide funding to adequately prepare for the emergencies facing residents such as wildfires, earthquakes, flooding, and public health emergencies like COVID-19.

Many local jurisdictions lack the resources to train and recruit sufficient emergency management staff to perform basic preparedness, mitigation, and recovery activities. The pool of emergency managers who produce readiness plans and provide public education and training in emergency preparedness has been reduced by cutbacks. Since 2003, there has been a significant reduction in emergency managers statewide and many emergency management programs have been transferred within local governments, or assigned to someone as an “extra responsibility.”

Additionally, our outreach to emergency managers around the state revealed a range of unmet preparedness needs that could not reasonably be funded with local resources. Notwithstanding funding from grants such as the Emergency Management Performance Grant, the lack of a
stable, predictable statewide funding system for preparedness limits the ability of local
governments to do the work necessary to prepare for disasters and emergencies.

Over the last two years, I have been working on Assembly Bill 291 (Chu, 2019-2020) which
passed the Assembly with bipartisan support, and, would establish an on-going statewide Local
Emergency Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Fund to support staffing, planning, and other
emergency mitigation priorities throughout the state that remain underfunded or neglected.
However, as we confront the sobering reality of our budget crisis, I am urging for flexibility in
proposed funding for emergency response to include preparedness work, especially with many
local jurisdictions facing unprecedented revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic, local
governments will be forced to cut budgets and furlough staff that are critical in emergency
planning and response.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please feel free to
contact me at (916) 319-2025.

Sincerely,

KANSEN CHU
Assemblymember, AD 25

ASH KALRA
Assemblymember, AD 27

Evan Low
Assemblymember, AD 28

CHRISTY SMITH
Assemblymember, AD 38

FREDDIE RODRIGUEZ
Assemblymember, AD 52

Cc: Jason Sisney, Assembly Budget Director
    Chris Woods, Senate Budget Director
    Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Asm. Budget Committee
    Jennifer Kim, Consultant, Asm. Budget Sub 5
    Joe Stephenshaw, Consultant, Senate Budget Sub 4