

2024

San Bernardino County

Legislative Platform

FINAL DRAFT

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Welcome to the 2024 San Bernardino County Legislative Platform

Counties care about people. These local governments are responsible for serving Californians with the greatest challenges and needs. San Bernardino County has nearly 23,000 dedicated employees across 42 departments; these men and women fight fires, manage airports, run preschools, health clinics, and libraries, find homes for neglected and abused children, build infrastructure, administer justice, help people find jobs, and perform many other important tasks that serve our community. As elected officials, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is proud to lead and direct this extraordinary public agency.

The annual Legislative Platform lays out San Bernardino County's long-term positions on a range of challenging policy issues. It highlights advocacy priorities the County will pursue in the coming year, specific areas of concern that the County will focus on with lawmakers, and general principles the County follows when assessing new legislation and regulations. This document is designed to guide County staff, who routinely work with state and federal agencies to implement programs, to advance the Board of Supervisors' vision on major policies. We also hope it will educate and inform residents and lawmakers about important policy issues and help them to support new laws and regulations that will improve San Bernardino County's communities.

The Board of Supervisors adhere to governing principles of fiscal stability, efficient delivery of services and operations, effective inter-agency cooperation, and a commitment to local control and decision-making. These central principles are reflected throughout the 2024 County Legislative Platform and direct our state and federal advocacy efforts on behalf of our constituents.

Sincerely,
The Board of Supervisors

2024 County Legislative Priorities

The 2024 Legislative Platform covers a wide range of important policy issues that affect San Bernardino County's funding, operations, and services. Major priorities of the Board of Supervisors are highlighted below and will be the focus of the County's legislative advocacy.

Effectively Addressing the Homeless Crisis

Homelessness is a serious challenge for communities across San Bernardino County. According to the 2023 Point-In-Time Count Homeless Survey, there were 4,195 homeless persons in the County, an increase of 25.9 percent from the previous year. Similar increases were seen across California in 2023: Los Angeles County reported a 9 percent increase in homelessness, up to 75,518, while Riverside County saw a 12 percent increase to 3,725 individuals. As of 2022, roughly 30 percent of all persons experiencing homelessness in the United States reside in California.

San Bernardino County is committed to reducing homelessness by providing critical services and a path to permanent housing. The Board of Supervisors has made substantial investments to expand supportive housing for the homeless as well as mental health and substance use treatment, however, much work remains to be done.

The County will advocate to make state homeless funding permanent, improve the administration of key grant programs, invest more resources in preventing at-risk populations from becoming homeless, and expedite the completion of major transitional and temporary housing projects.

State Budget Request for County Family and Foster Youth Campus

The 2015 Continuum of Care reform changed the foster youth system in California, curtailing out-of-state placements. These changes have created a major challenge for counties since most lack temporary housing facilities, especially for foster youth who need a more intensive set of services and support than can be provided in a resource family home or other family-based setting. The unfortunate consequence of these changes is that some foster youth with complex needs have spent extended periods of time in county shelters, hospital settings or other facilities, including offices, awaiting placement.

To address this challenge, San Bernardino County will seek \$40 million in the 2024-25 state budget to construct a family and foster youth temporary housing campus, modeled on similar campuses operated by other California counties. The campus will provide transitional housing for foster youth who have aged out of the system, a short-term behavioral health therapeutic program for foster youth, and temporary housing for foster youth with complex needs as they await placement. It will also support an 18-month substance use disorder recovery program for mothers and their children. Building this extraordinary campus is a long-term commitment to ensure that temporary and transitional housing is available in San Bernardino County for families and foster youth.

Additionally, the County will support legislation to expedite foster youth facility licensing and to streamline the hiring and training of staff for foster youth programs.

Mt. Baldy Trail Permits and Reimbursement for Search and Rescue Services

Mt. Baldy (Mt. San Antonio) is one of the tallest mountains in Southern California with roughly 20 trails leading to its peak, making it a popular attraction for experienced hikers and novices. Since 2020, there have been over 100 searches and at least 10 confirmed deaths on the mountain. The increase in emergency rescues, injuries, and fatalities on Mt. Baldy has strained the resources of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department which provides search and rescue services in this section of the Angeles National Forest. Search and rescue operations require extraordinary deployments of manpower and equipment, with each rescue costing hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Sheriff's Department.

To improve hiker safety on Mt. Baldy, San Bernardino County will advocate for the following policy changes:

Mandatory Trail Permits and Enforcement: The County calls upon policymakers and the U.S. Forest Service to require trail permits to hike Mt. Baldy. Trail permits are required by many federal agencies that manage public lands including the National Parks Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, as well as the Forest Service. The Forest Service should use the permitting process to educate and inform visitors about the potentially dangerous conditions on the mountain and advise hikers to bring the proper equipment, clothing, and gear. The Forest Service should strictly enforce trail permits, especially during bad weather. The County will advocate for additional funding and staff resources for the Angeles National Forest to effectively implement this new permitting and enforcement program.

Trail Closures During Bad Weather: Weather conditions at high elevations can rapidly change. Rain, snow, and heavy fog can cause hikers to become disoriented and lost, leading to injuries or even fatal accidents. When highly dangerous weather conditions exist, the U.S. Forest Service should close the trails on Mt. Baldy. While no one wishes to deny access to public lands, closing trails saves lives and protects visitors from harm.

Reimbursement for Search and Rescue Services: Local agencies should be reimbursed for emergency search and rescue services on federal lands. This ensures that search and rescue assistance is available for the public while financially supporting the local agencies that provide these services. Reimbursement for services rendered is cheaper and easier than federal agencies hiring, training, and deploying their own search and rescue teams. The County will advocate for federal policy changes and funding to reimburse local agencies for search and rescue services.

Improving Recreational Amenities at County Regional Parks

The Board of Supervisors has invested millions of dollars in the County's regional parks to maintain and improve amenities for the public. The County will continue to support these key facilities in the years ahead, to ensure that residents have access to world-class parks.

Prado Regional Park: The County operates the 2,280-acre Prado Regional Park in unincorporated Chino on a leasehold obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The County is seeking to expand amenities at Prado Regional Park that will improve the recreational options for visitors.

A state parks bond, Proposition 70, was passed by California voters in 1988. San Bernardino County received a funding grant from Prop 70 to purchase over 300 acres of land in the Chino Agricultural Preserve. Subsequent state legislation authorized the County to sell its Prop 70 property and use the sale proceeds to acquire replacement property or make improvements to parks in the area. The County will advocate for legislation or administrative actions that permit the County to use Prop 70 land sale proceeds to significantly improve Prado Park and other parks in the Chino Agricultural Preserve while conserving important wildlife habitat in the region.

Glen Helen Regional Park: Glen Helen Regional Park is an important cultural landmark in the County that hosts major concerts and events. The facility requires substantial investment to upgrade existing roadways, infrastructure, and key features like the amphitheater and swimming pools. A major priority for the Board is the completion of Glen Helen Parkway, which connects the park to Interstate 15 and the 215 freeways. The County will work with the State Parks Department to make substantial improvements at Glen Helen Regional Park.

Kessler Park: Kessler Park is an important community asset in the unincorporated area of Bloomington that has the potential to become a much larger recreational facility. Kessler Park currently features two softball fields and two baseball fields but lacks other important amenities. The County will make additional investments and improvements at Kessler Park to expand recreational opportunities for residents.

Funding for Fire and Emergency Services on Federal Lands

The San Bernardino County Fire District provides fire and emergency response for the largest geographic county in the nation; its jurisdiction includes 16,032 square miles of federal lands. The County Fire District responds to 8,200 incidents every year on federal lands including wildfires, searches and rescues, vehicular accidents, emergency medical response, hazardous material clean up, and train derailments. However, the federal government provides no reimbursement for the services rendered by the County Fire District. Given the immense size of San Bernardino County and the vast federal lands in the region, these service calls are a major strain on local equipment, staffing, and funding resources.

San Bernardino County will advocate for direct funding to support counties with extensive public lands defined as those comprised of 75 percent or more of federal property. This funding will support fire and emergency services provided by local agencies on federal lands.

Section 1: Improving Housing Affordability and Access

There is an urgent need for affordable, workforce and entry-level housing in California. Extremely expensive housing forces working families to either live beyond their financial means or live long distances from where they work. Families and individuals that must spend over half their incomes on housing often struggle to cover other major expenses like medical care, education, and childcare. State lawmakers and local elected officials have created programs and dedicated funding to improve housing affordability and availability. Unfortunately, many of these programs have narrow eligibility standards and cumbersome administrative processes that hinder their effectiveness.

San Bernardino County strongly supports increasing the housing supply and lowering the cost of housing in the region. The Board of Supervisors will advocate for policies that expedite the completion of single-family and multi-family housing projects, especially affordable housing projects, as well as accessory dwelling units. It opposes efforts to increase the cost of housing through additional rules, regulations, and adversarial litigation.

1.1 - Increased Funding for the HOME Investment Partnership Program: The HOME Investment Partnership Program allows local communities the ability to design and implement affordable housing programs for low and moderate-income residents. This program has proven to be successful in increasing affordable housing stock across the country. San Bernardino County will advocate for Congress to increase funding to support this important housing program.

1.2 - Sustained Funding for the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG): Local agencies use the flexibility of CDBG funding to preserve and renovate existing housing stock and its accompanying water, sewer, and storm drain infrastructure. CDBG funding helps maintain a community's existing housing supply and ensure that there are quality homes available. The CDBG program has faced significant funding cuts in recent years, dropping by over \$500 million since 2010. San Bernardino County supports the CDBG program and urges Congress to maintain funding for critical CDBG housing grants.

1.3 - Increased Funding and Flexibility for Housing Choice Vouchers: The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino has a years-long wait list for low-income families and individuals who are seeking rental subsidies through the Housing Choice Vouchers program. To meet the high demand for these vouchers, the County supports efforts to increase funding for this key program. It also supports increasing the allowed percentage cap on Project-Based Vouchers from 30 percent to 50 percent.

1.4 - Support for First-Time Homebuyer Programs: The County supports ongoing funding for first-time homebuyer programs to help more County residents purchase homes.

1.5 - Streamlined Funding for Affordable Housing Developers and Local Agencies: Most affordable housing developers and local governments must navigate a complex, byzantine bureaucratic process to assemble enough funding to complete housing projects. It can take years of effort just to obtain funding, not including time for planning, design, and construction. This

system must be changed if California is ever going to effectively build affordable housing on a broad scale over the coming decades.

The County will continue to advocate for state regulatory reforms that will significantly reduce the cost of affordable housing construction and expedite the delivery of these important projects. Enhanced state and federal low-income housing tax credits are also essential to stimulate affordable housing production. Finally, local agencies should be allowed greater flexibility to use housing funds to support administrative staff who oversee and execute these programs.

Section 2: Addressing Homelessness

San Bernardino County is committed to reducing homelessness by providing critical services and a path to permanent housing. The County will advocate to make state homeless funding permanent, improve the administration of key grant programs, invest more resources in preventing at-risk populations from becoming homeless, and expedite the completion of major transitional and temporary housing projects.

2.1 - Permanent Funding for the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP)

Program: Long-term, sustained funding for local governments is essential to make meaningful progress in reducing homelessness. Ongoing funding provides stability and predictability for grant awardees, allowing them to plan and execute long-term projects and initiatives. It empowers local agencies to focus on achieving positive outcomes, eliminating the uncertainty of short funding cycles. Ongoing funding also reduces the administrative burden and costs of submitting new grant applications ensuring that local agencies can hire and retain high-quality staff.

The Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention program has provided significant funding over the past five years to support local homelessness programs. The County will advocate for an extension of the HHAP program beyond Round 5 to continue its support for local governments to provide homeless housing and services.

2.2 - Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Program: The ERF program provided \$350 million in the 2022-23 and \$400 million in the 2023-24 state budgets for competitive grants to local agencies to provide services and house individuals residing in encampments. The ERF program is effective, but it would be beneficial to both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties if ERF funding could be sustained over an extended period. This would support a large-scale regional partnership in the Inland Empire to eliminate encampments in the Santa Ana River watershed. The ERF program should also fund an outreach component to encourage more individuals to utilize available services. San Bernardino County will strongly advocate for these important changes to the ERF program.

2.3 - Increase Administrative Rates for Homelessness Grants: Homeless programs require a significant amount of staff time and effort to effectively administer. Unfortunately, the administrative funding percentage in the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and HHAP is very low; currently, the administrative share for HHAP is 7 percent and the state ESG percentage is only 2.5 percent. At that percentage, if an agency were to administer \$1 million in HHAP funding, it could only pay \$70,000 in staff salary to run the program.

The County supports policy changes to allow local agencies the flexibility to spend up to 9 percent as an administrative percentage for ESG and HHAP grants.

2.4 - Support for the Grants Pass Appeal and Overturning the Boise Decision: In 2018, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued the *Martin v. City of Boise* decision that significantly limits local agencies' authority to clear homeless encampments. The ruling found that the City of Boise's ordinance prohibiting sitting, sleeping, or lying outside on public property is unconstitutional

under the 8th Amendment. The *Boise* decision held that cities cannot enforce anti-camping ordinances if they do not have enough shelter beds available for their homeless population. The 9th Circuit left open the question of whether any limits on public camping can be considered constitutional.

The municipal code of Grants Pass, Oregon regulates camping on public property. Following the *Boise* ruling, Grants Pass amended its ordinance to allow sleeping in public, however, it prohibits homeless persons from using sleeping bags or other materials used for bedding purposes. In 2020, the 9th Circuit in the *Johnson v. Grants Pass* decision reiterated the 2018 *Boise* ruling and struck down Grant Pass's prohibition on bedding materials. This decision, together with the *Boise* case, significantly erodes a city or county's ability to deter and clear homeless encampments on public property, rendering them unable to adequately address serious public health and safety concerns. For these reasons, San Bernardino County has recently joined other agencies in an amicus brief requesting the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the Grants Pass appeal.

The County believes that local anti-camping ordinances are constitutional, and that the 9th Circuit's decisions in *Johnson v. Grants Pass* and *Martin v. Boise* should be overturned to allow local governments greater flexibility in housing individuals experiencing homelessness. The Supreme Court has recently agreed to hear the Grants Pass appeal and a ruling in that case should be issued sometime this summer.

2.5 - Effective Implementation of Laura's Law: Laura's Law allows court-ordered assisted outpatient treatment for individuals with severe mental illness who have a history of hospitalizations, incarcerations, and acts of violence. Implementing Laura's Law will provide treatment to those who are mentally or physically unable to seek help on their own. The Board of Supervisors has directed County staff to begin full implementation of Laura's Law to successfully help those who are gravely disabled. The County is committed to successfully implementing Laura's Law to ensure that those who need care and treatment for severe mental illness can receive it.

2.6 - Ongoing Support for the Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) Team and the Community Outreach and Support Team (COAST): The Sheriff's Department HOPE and the Fire District COAST homeless outreach teams have a long record of service and success in the region. They actively contact individuals experiencing homelessness and encourage them to accept assistance, including housing, mental health, medical, and other critical services. The Board of Supervisors will continue to support these outreach teams and will advocate for additional funding to expand their activities in the County.

2.7 - Completion of the Pacific Village Transitional Housing Project: The County's Pacific Village project currently provides transitional housing with social and behavioral health support to 726 individuals annually. In the future, this facility will include a substance use disorder treatment component. The County is actively seeking additional Project Roomkey funding to complete the full buildout of the Pacific Village Transitional Housing Project.

2.8 – Focused Homelessness Prevention Efforts for Seniors and Former Foster Youth: Point-in-time count data indicates that seniors are increasingly vulnerable to becoming homeless. With rising inflation and already extremely expensive housing costs in California, seniors that have fixed incomes and lack family assistance, are in danger of losing their homes. Similar challenges confront children and youth who have lived in the foster care system. Upon entering adulthood, these young people often lack a family support system to help them provide for themselves. The County will concentrate resources on these two groups to help prevent this population from experiencing homelessness.

Section 3: Infrastructure and Transportation

Infrastructure and transportation are essential investments to maintain vibrant communities. The Board of Supervisors strongly supports infrastructure development in the region to address multimodal transportation, freight cargo and goods movement, flood control and water infrastructure, roads, active transportation, pedestrian improvements, and mass transit.

The County supports expedited project completion and flexibility in the administration of infrastructure programs and funding. This includes the mitigation of impacts derived from freight movement and congestion.

The County opposes legislation, budget actions, or policy proposals that compromise local and regional infrastructure funding or project completion.

3.1 – Support for Expanded Use of the Design-Build Project Delivery Process: Local governments rely on innovative project delivery methods such as progressive design-build procurement to ensure that important building and infrastructure projects are completed in a cost-effective and timely manner. The County supports ongoing authorization for design-build procurement and other innovative methods to expeditiously finish projects on time and on budget.

3.2 - Passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA): The County supports passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) to support the water management and infrastructure programs of the Army Corps of Engineers. Water resource studies and projects authorized in the WRDA bill support local agencies' management and maintenance of watersheds, drinking water systems, stormwater collection basins, groundwater recharge facilities, and numerous other projects. WRDA funding and Army Corps programs are especially critical to maintain dams and other flood control infrastructure.

3.3 – Ongoing Technical Assistance for Rural Communities: Both the federal and state governments have initiated widespread technical assistance programs for rural communities. Small, rural communities usually lack the staff and expertise to effectively compete for state and federal resources. The County supports ongoing funding for state and federal rural technical assistance programs, especially for infrastructure, water, healthcare, and social service grants.

3.4 - Public Lands Renewable Development Act: The County supports the Public Lands Renewable Development Act (PLRDA), federal legislation that provides counties with a share of wind, solar and geothermal energy projects developed on public lands. Revenue sharing ensures that these energy development projects support local communities and offset negative impacts on local wildlife and habitat.

3.5 – Support for the Ontario and San Bernardino International Airports: The County supports ongoing efforts to expand passenger service and add more flights to Ontario and San Bernardino International Airports. This includes support for expanded air cargo activities and future infrastructure investment to ensure both facilities can effectively serve residents of the Inland Empire.

3.6 – Completion of the Brightline West High Speed Rail Project: The County supports the completion of the Brightline West High Speed Rail providing service from Rancho Cucamonga through the Cajon Pass to Apple Valley and on to Las Vegas.

3.7 - Barstow International Gateway Rail Facility: The County supports the construction of the Barstow International Gateway, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway integrated freight facility that will efficiently transfer rail cargo from the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles for nationwide distribution. Completion of this important project will reduce the impacts of freight and truck traffic congestion on County residents along the Interstate-15 corridor while bringing much needed jobs and investment to the County and City of Barstow.

3.8 - Creating Transportation Alternatives to the Cajon Pass Corridor: The County supports efforts to study and develop alternative transportation corridors to connect the High Desert communities with the San Bernardino Valley in the event a major earthquake, wildfire, or other natural disaster renders the I-15 Cajon Pass corridor impassable.

3.9 – Implementation Pause of SB 1383 Organic Waste Recycling State Mandate: California residents have seen sharp increases in waste hauling fees due to SB 1383, the state’s ambitious organic waste recycling law. A recent Hoover Commission report found that California missed its 2020 goal to reduce the organic waste entering landfills by 50 percent from 2014 levels; instead, the amount of organic waste *increased* by a million tons from 2014 to 2020. The state will also likely miss the 2025 SB 1383 reduction benchmark. More than a hundred local governments have been unable to meet the state’s SB 1383 implementation deadline and have sought an extension to comply with the law. SB 1383’s regulations especially harm rural Californians by directing organic waste to be collected through curbside waste hauling. Most rural communities do not have curbside trash collection; many do not even have paved roads that can accommodate heavy garbage trucks.

San Bernardino County will advocate for a pause in the implementation of SB 1383. A pause would allow local agencies time to alter their waste facilities, give waste haulers an opportunity to restructure their collection systems, and provide state policymakers an opportunity to craft a better law that is both affordable and effective in reducing organic waste and methane emissions.

3.10 – Septic-to-Sewer Conversion Projects in Unincorporated Areas: Unincorporated areas and communities typically lack modern sewer systems, relying instead on septic tanks. At the direction of the Board of Supervisors, the County has recently initiated several important septic-to-sewer conversion projects in unincorporated areas. These critical projects are a long-term investment to improve public health and wastewater services for residents while also making these areas more attractive for future housing and business development. The County will continue to support state and federal funding for septic-to-sewer conversion projects as well as technical assistance for smaller water districts and systems to update, maintain, renovate, and replace their water infrastructure.

Section 4: Fire, Disaster, and Emergency Response

The San Bernardino County Fire District provides fire and emergency response for the largest geographic county in the nation. The Fire District responds to 8,200 incidents every year on 16,032 square miles of federal lands with no reimbursement for the services rendered. These incidents include wildfires, searches and rescues, vehicular accidents, emergency medical response, hazardous material clean up, and train derailments. With the immense size of San Bernardino County and the vast federal lands in the region, these service calls are a major strain on local equipment, staffing, and funding resources. San Bernardino County strongly believes that the federal government must directly assist counties with extensive federal lands by providing additional funding to support local fire and emergency services.

4.1 - Reimbursement for Fire and Emergency Response Services on Public Lands: Local agencies inevitably provide substantial fire and emergency services on federal lands in their jurisdictions. Counties with extensive federal lands – defined as those whose jurisdictions are comprised of 70 percent or more of federally-owned public lands – should receive dedicated, ongoing federal funding to support the emergency response and fire services they provide. This ensures these critical services are available to support federal agencies while recompensing local agencies for the cost of providing these services.

4.2 - Changes to the Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) Formula: Significant changes to the PILT formula should be made to support counties with extensive federal lands, thereby reducing the weight given to population. Additional funding through PILT will better support the local agencies who have greater amounts of federal land than other jurisdictions.

4.3 - Substantial Investment in Undergrowth Clearing and Improved Forest Management: Poor management of California’s national forests has allowed undergrowth to build up over decades, providing a significant fuel source for the state’s mega-wildfires that have burned millions of acres in the past several years. A new approach to forest management emphasizing proactive undergrowth clearing, fuel reduction strategies, and collaborative management between local, state, and federal agencies should be implemented.

4.4 - Wage Increase for Federal Firefighters: Federal agencies are significantly underpaying the firefighting workforce, leading many of these firefighters to seek employment elsewhere. This has dangerous consequences for local agencies, as federal firefighting resources can be severely limited by the lack of a properly trained and fully staffed firefighting force. The County supports higher wages for federal wildland firefighters that provides parity with state and local firefighters, to improve the recruitment and retention of these critical workers.

4.5 - Availability and Affordability of California Fire Insurance: Several major insurance companies have recently left the California market, citing the extraordinary wildfire risk and an inability to raise rates to adequately address those risks. This has made it extremely difficult for Californians to purchase fire insurance to protect their homes and property.

Recent actions by Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara will allow insurance companies to use future projection models to assess risk, which has induced some companies to return to the state. While this is a rapidly evolving policy area, the County generally supports efforts that will ensure that Californians have access to reasonably priced fire insurance and that coverage will continue to be offered in high-risk areas and communities.

4.6 - Funding for Maintenance and Construction of County Fire Training Facilities: The County Fire District must construct new, and maintain existing, fire and emergency response training facilities. The San Bernardino Regional Emergency Training Center (SBRETC) is one of the only West Coast facilities that provides federally required aircraft rescue and firefighting training for commercial airport agencies. The SBRETC needs substantial investment to upgrade its training facilities. Similarly, the Regional Wildland Fire Fighter and Dozer Academy trains fire agencies throughout the region on wildland firefighting strategies and bulldozer techniques. This facility must be relocated and rebuilt at a new permanent location. The County will actively seek state and federal funding to construct and repair these critical fire training facilities.

Section 5: Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice

San Bernardino County is committed to upholding the principles of justice, protecting the rights and safety of our residents, and ensuring our law enforcement and administration of justice systems are effective, fair, equitable, and uphold the highest professional standards of conduct.

5.1 – Reimbursement for Search and Rescue Operations on Federal Lands: Roughly 80 percent of San Bernardino County is comprised of federal lands. County departments are frequently asked to provide emergency services on federal public lands, creating an enormous strain on funding, equipment, and staff. This is especially taxing for the Sheriff’s Department as well as the Fire District that must dispatch personnel and equipment hundreds of miles to provide services in remote, isolated areas.

A major area of concern is Mt. Baldy, a peak over 10,000 feet tall (officially named Mount San Antonio) in the San Gabriel Mountains on the border of Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties. Mt. Baldy attracts frequent visitors who are not prepared for the difficult terrain or unpredictable weather conditions. Hikers frequently become lost, suffer injuries, or perish. At least 10 deaths have occurred on Mt. Baldy since 2020, leading the *Los Angeles Times* to call it the “killer mountain.” To help hikers stranded or injured on the mountain, over the past five years the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department has spent over \$3 million dollars conducting more than 100 search and rescue operations. This extraordinary level of expense and effort – often endangering sheriff deputies and rescue personnel – is simply unsustainable.

San Bernardino County supports federal legislation and funding to fully reimburse local agencies for costs incurred in rescue operations on federal lands. The County will also advocate for federal funding to support responders with specialized equipment to locate, aid, and transport individuals who are lost, injured, stranded, or trapped in remote areas.

5.2 – Funding and Technical Support for Law Enforcement Cybersecurity Efforts: Ransomware attacks on public agencies have sharply increased in the United States. These attacks force agencies to temporarily shut down entire computer systems, including email, in-car computers, and many support databases. Agencies are frequently forced to pay the ransom to get their systems back online. Although many of these attacks are done for profit, there are other malicious actors who could hijack computer systems to cause immense harm.

San Bernardino County supports vigilant federal cybersecurity programs to deter future hacks and reduce the number of cyber-attacks on public agencies.

5.3 – Growth Caps on Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) Determinations: Criminal defendants who are unable to understand criminal proceedings or assist counsel in their defense are determined by a court to be Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST). If these individuals are charged with a felony, they can be committed to the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) to receive treatment and medical care. The purpose of state treatment is to restore competency and enable these defendants to resume criminal proceedings. To help address an increasing number of IST defendants being referred to DSH, the State of California recently assigned a growth cap to each

county limiting IST referrals. Counties are now responsible to pay a portion of the treatment costs for IST defendants if they exceed their assigned referral baseline.

San Bernardino County is opposed to the Incompetent to Stand Trial growth cap, and the penalties for exceeding that cap. The County will strongly advocate eliminating the IST referral cap and calls for changes in the program to expedite state hospital placement. While we appreciate the desire to limit IST referrals, with the sharp increase in mental illness resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is unreasonable for counties to be penalized for increases in IST referrals.

The County supports state funding for local behavioral health programs to collaborate with law enforcement agencies to provide better treatment for this challenging population.

5.4 – Placement of Sexually Violent Predators (SVP): A sexually violent predator is someone convicted of a sexually violent offense and diagnosed with a mental disorder that causes them to be a danger to others with a high likelihood of reoffending. The Sexually Violent Predator Act provides for the treatment and rehabilitation of convicted SVPs after the completion of their prison sentence. After meeting certain legal criteria, eligible SVPs may be transferred to the Department of State Hospitals for sex offender treatment. The process of placing an SVP in a community is strictly regulated by law. Courts determine whether an SVP is eligible for conditional release and where the SVP will live.

Many SVPs from different parts of the California have been placed in isolated, rural communities in San Bernardino County. This is an active danger to unsuspecting residents and their families. It is not fair or just to place these individuals in communities where access to treatment and monitoring is severely limited. The County strongly supports legislation or regulatory actions that require SVPs to be placed in the county that they resided in prior to their conviction, where they can be properly supervised and receive ongoing reentry support and treatment services.

5.5 - State Funding to Support Additional Judges in the Inland Empire: California does not have enough judges. This is a major problem for the justice system, leading to heavy caseloads and long delays in resolution of cases. According to the 2022 Judicial Council's Judicial Needs Assessment, over 100 new judges are needed across the state, with the most acute need in the Inland Empire, which has seen rapid population growth over the past 30 years. According to this Judicial Needs Assessment, San Bernardino County needs 30 new judges.

The County supported SB 75 (Roth, Chapter 482) in the 2023 state legislative session which authorized the creation of 26 new judge positions in the state. However, these 26 new judge positions must be funded on an ongoing basis in the state budget. San Bernardino County strongly supports ongoing state funding for these 26 new judges and will advocate that they be funded in 2024.

5.6 – State Funding to Construct and Renovate Court Facilities: San Bernardino County's court facilities are essential parts of our justice system. However, due to rapid population growth in the

region, many of our court buildings are now outdated, lack sufficient office space, and do not have modern technology systems, which impedes the efficient operation of the judicial system.

San Bernardino County supports additional state funding for the Judicial Council to expedite significant court facility expansions and renovations in Victorville and other areas in the region.

5.7 – Increased Penalties for Fentanyl-related Crimes: The rapid spread of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is causing a sharp increase in drug overdose deaths in California. The extraordinary potency and easy accessibility of fentanyl is straining local healthcare and law enforcement systems. Recent state legislation has created task forces and assigned additional resources to interdict illegal fentanyl shipments smuggled into the state.

San Bernardino County supports legislation that imposes tougher criminal sentences for fentanyl dealers and will continue to support increased accessibility to fentanyl overdose treatments and drug use prevention programs.

5.8 – Illegal Cannabis Cultivation: California voters legalized cannabis for recreational use with the passage of Proposition 64 in 2016. Since then, the state has struggled to create a viable, legal market for cannabis due to high taxes, heavy regulation, and a glut of readily available illegal cannabis that undermines legitimate, law-abiding cannabis businesses.

San Bernardino County has had a wave of illegal cannabis farms spread across the Mojave Desert. The criminals running these illegal farms are often connected to international narcotics cartels and syndicates. They frequently steal water to keep their farms running, breaking into water mains, storage facilities, or drilling illegal wells to tap into groundwater. Dangerous pesticides, such as carbofuran, are used on these illicit marijuana crops, but often end up poisoning birds, animals, and other wildlife. The farm workers are usually trafficked victims from foreign countries. Increasingly, our Sheriff's deputies find guns and other weapons as they eradicate these illegal farms. More troubling still is that illegal cannabis farming is occurring in rented homes in residential neighborhoods, hidden away from public view and often destroying the interior of these houses. New state policies must be developed and enforced to address the environmental damage and criminal activity of illegal cannabis farming in California.

San Bernardino County supports:

- ***Prosecution of International Crime Syndicates:*** Federal law enforcement agencies must prosecute international and multi-state crime syndicates that support illegal cannabis farming.
- ***Increased Criminal Penalties for Illegal Cannabis Activities:*** Strong state and federal legislation is needed to increase criminal penalties for growing illegal cannabis and using hazardous pesticides and chemicals substances on public lands, which will deter future illegal cannabis crime.
- ***Funding for Environmental Cleanup of Cannabis Farming Sites:*** Illegal cannabis farming causes extraordinary environmental harm. These criminal operations use illegal pesticides, herbicides, and rodenticides in significant quantities, dump trash and waste at these farm sites, and destroy plants and animals. San Bernardino County will seek state and federal

resources to clean up illegal cannabis cultivation sites, thereby avoiding groundwater contamination that harms local drinking water supplies.

5.9 – Juvenile Justice Realignment: California has enacted a series of legislative and voter-approved measures to reduce the population of the state juvenile corrections system, largely by decreasing incarceration and expanding community-based options for youth. The Division of Juvenile Justice realignment enacted in SB 823 made counties responsible for young people who would have previously been placed in state custody. On July 1, 2021, the responsibility for all youth designated as wards of the court was permanently shifted to county governments. San Bernardino County’s Probation Department oversees these new responsibilities for justice-involved youth.

San Bernardino County will advocate for the following juvenile justice policies:

- **Sufficient County Authority to Fulfill State-Mandated Responsibilities:** The County opposes policies that impede the delivery of effective treatment services, hinder proper supervision of youth during their entry into the juvenile system, and assign counties responsibility but deny these agencies sufficient authority to fulfill these duties.
- **Effective Mental and Behavioral Health Services:** Increased funding and resources are needed to effectively provide mental and behavioral health treatment to justice-involved youth. The County will support funding and policies that empower local agencies to successfully implement juvenile justice reform.
- **Renovations and Improvements to Juvenile Housing Facilities:** The County also supports funding to renovate and improve juvenile housing facilities. The state simply must provide resources that allow local agencies to make the prescribed infrastructure changes required by California state law.
- **Reduce Recidivism:** San Bernardino County actively tries to reduce recidivism for both adult and juvenile offenders by collaborating with community-based service organizations. It will continue to support policies and funding to allow these successful collaborations to continue.

5.10 – Patton State Hospital Perimeter Security: The California Department of State Hospitals operates Patton State Hospital, which provides treatment to inmates and patients who are declared incompetent to stand trial, not guilty by reason of insanity, sexually violent predators, or offenders with severe mental health disorders. The state is responsible for securing Patton State Hospital and ensuring that the facility is properly staffed to prevent patients from leaving the grounds without authorization or supervision. As of July 3, 2023, the state had reduced the security staff monitoring Patton’s perimeter fences from 71 peace officers to 44 – a 38 percent reduction – to create operational efficiencies.

San Bernardino County has very significant concerns about reducing the security personnel for a state facility housing potentially dangerous patients that is surrounded by residential homes, schools, and businesses. The County will advocate for ongoing state funding to keep a full complement of peace officers to secure Patton State Hospital.

5.11 – Revisions to Proposition 47 to Increase Penalties for Shoplifting and Retail Theft:

Proposition 47, passed by California voters in 2014, downgraded several theft and drug possession offences from previously being classified as felonies to now be only misdemeanors with lenient penalties. Significantly, under Prop 47 any merchandise stolen with a value less than \$950 is considered a crime only chargeable as a misdemeanor. Law enforcement officials believe that Proposition 47 has contributed to a significant increase in petty theft and shoplifting across the state including widespread flash mobs and organized retail theft rings.

The Board of Supervisors supports revisions to Prop 47 to allow tougher penalties for petty theft and shoplifting, especially for repeat offenders. This would include lowering the value of merchandise stolen from \$950 to \$400 that can be chargeable as a misdemeanor. Under this lower threshold, for thefts of merchandise valued over \$400m these would be chargeable as a felony. These stronger penalties will deter crimes like petty theft and organized shoplifting, supporting businesses large and small while alleviating criminal activity in urban downtowns and shopping centers.

Section 6: Finance and Governance

Effective governance and sensible financial management are essential to maintain effective County services. Departments cannot provide services and programs cannot be implemented without proper financial management and compliance. The Board of Supervisors has maintained a conservative budgetary approach for many years, acting as careful stewards of the revenues they are entrusted with. This has ensured that the County is in a strong financial position to endure downturns in the economy.

San Bernardino County will maintain its careful financial management and approach to governance. It supports legislation, budget actions, and policy proposals that provide the following:

Flexibility in Administering Federal, State, and Local Programs: The Board of Supervisors adamantly believes that local agencies need flexibility to administer federal, state, and local programs. Local agencies should have decision-making authority over the use of federal funds, including directing grants or mandatory pass-through allocations.

Elimination of Unnecessary Reporting Requirements: Unnecessary, redundant, or overlapping requirements or regulations for program eligibility, funding maintenance of efforts, monitoring, permitting, or reporting should be eliminated. This reduces the administrative workload of counties, freeing staff to address other issues. Public agencies should also be permitted to adopt new technology and innovation to streamline the delivery of services.

Opposition to Unfunded State Mandates and Abrogation of Local Agency Discretionary Authority: The County opposes legislation and budget actions that preempt the County's discretionary authority, erodes local control, or limits the agency's ability to operate in a reasonable and cost-effective manner. Programs should not be transferred from the federal or state governments to counties unless program control and flexibility are also granted, and funding is guaranteed. New mandates should not be imposed on local agencies without a viable, adequate, and dedicated source of revenue to support these new directives.

6.1 - Expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds: San Bernardino County has diligently allocated \$423.5 million in ARPA funds to projects that improve our communities and produce more equitable outcomes, especially for vulnerable populations harmed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Upon receiving its first ARPA allocation in May 2021, the County identified 39 major projects and hundreds of other smaller projects that will assist with pandemic response and economic recovery. Some of those key projects are outlined below:

Emergency Operations Center: During the pandemic, San Bernardino County officials recognized the urgent need for a modern, centralized emergency operations center to efficiently coordinate emergency response teams during a natural disaster. A substantial portion of the County's ARPA allocation will be used to construct a new emergency operations center to direct a coordinated response to natural disasters and other emergency situations in the region.

Park Improvements: The County has also invested ARPA funds in several significant park improvements to meet the growing demand for outdoor recreation and exercise. The County partnered with the City of Ontario and the Ontario-Montclair School District to improve the baseball fields at Bon View Park, repurposing a facility that was under-utilized as a gathering space and community resource. The concept will also include access to on-site services through a partnership between County departments and non-profit service providers.

Pacific Village Transitional Housing: The County has invested ARPA funding in new homeless initiatives, in particular Pacific Village. This transitional housing facility will serve individuals experiencing homelessness and will use ARPA funding to dramatically expand its campus. Currently in the design and development stage, future improvements will increase residential capacity by repurposing existing buildings, constructing new housing units, and improving property features.

School Athletic Fields: The County Board of Supervisors has allocated a portion of ARPA funds towards school athletic fields and other facilities, recognizing the harmful effect the pandemic has had on the physical and mental health of children and youth. The County also funded three bilingual mobile literacy programs that support early reading development from birth to third grade.

The singular funding opportunity of ARPA is being invested in transformative community projects that will improve local infrastructure and serve San Bernardino County residents for generations to come.

6.2 - Election Integrity and Security: The County supports policies and programs that maintain election integrity and improve safety for election workers. This includes support for dedicated federal funding, such as Help America Vote Act Security Grants, to ensure the safety of County Registrar of Voter staff, volunteers, and voters as well as the security and integrity of voting machines and equipment.

6.3 - Cybersecurity: Cybersecurity has become a fundamental necessity for public agencies, corporations, utilities, and private individuals. The state and federal government should assist local agencies to deter, prevent, and respond to hacking attempts by providing additional funding, greater training opportunities, and disrupting and dismantling hostile hackers from foreign powers and criminal organizations.

6.4 - County Support for a Fair Share of State and Federal Funding and Resources: A majority of County voters supported Measure EE in November 2022, directing the Board of Supervisors to study whether the County is receiving its fair share of state and federal resources. Research into the allocation of resources to the County is underway. The Board of Supervisors firmly supports legislative and policy efforts to address historic inequities in the allocation of state and federal funding to the region, to ensure that our region receives its fair share.

Section 7: Behavioral Health and Human Services

County governments have an important responsibility to help those with the greatest needs in our society. Over a dozen County departments administer state and federal safety-net services to assist children and foster youth, provide CalFresh food benefits, protect and care for aging adults, and house individuals experiencing homelessness. A priority for the Board of Supervisors is behavioral health services, which are critical to residents of all ages and an urgent need across the region.

San Bernardino County **supports** the following legislative, budget, and policy proposals:

Full Funding for Federally Mandated Health and Human Services Programs: Sufficient funding should be provided to fulfill federal health and human service program mandates. Federal formulas should equitably allocate funding. Counties should also be exempt from fiscal penalties when the federal government does not provide adequate funding.

Flexibility in Program Delivery: Greater flexibility is needed to ensure programs are delivered efficiently and in a cost-effective manner. The County will advocate removing categorical funding restrictions allowing for greater local authority to achieve desired outcomes. More data sharing and coordination between agencies is also needed to improve service delivery.

Streamlined Application Process: Residents applying for federal assistance programs are required to complete onerous and sometimes confusing applications. These applications should be streamlined and simplified to make it easier for customers to complete and for county staff to review and approve applications. Increased automation will also improve the streamlining process.

The County **opposes** the following legislative, budget, and policy proposals:

Transfer of Programs to Counties Without Adequate Funding: The transfer of health and human service programs from the federal government to local agencies without guaranteed program control and adequate funding is a recipe for disaster. Local governments should not be given a responsibility without having the financial resources to effectively deliver services.

Unsustainable Funding or Formulaic Cuts to Funding: The County opposes funding formulas that impede the delivery of effective health and human service programs. Programs take time to build and implement – staff must be hired and trained, procedures developed, offices set up, contracts awarded, etc. This requires planning and time. Funding to support these programs must be sustained over the long term to provide substantive assistance.

Loss of Local Control and Administrative Discretion: The County opposes actions that erode local control of the administration of health and human service programs.

7.1 – CARE Act Implementation: Without adequate treatment and support, many Californians with severe mental health disorders frequently end up homeless or incarcerated. The recently enacted CARE Act creates a new court system to help individuals with schizophrenia and other serious schizophrenia-related disorders receive mental health treatment. Seven counties began CARE Act implementation in October 2023, with the rest of the state scheduled to initiate this new program by the end of 2024.

County departments such as Behavioral Health, Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, the Sheriff's Department, the Public Defender, and Aging and Adult Services / Public Guardian have already begun meeting to develop a coordinated plan for CARE Act implementation. The Board of Supervisors is committed to executing this important program effectively to ensure that County residents with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-related disorders receive proper medical and behavioral treatment.

7.2 – Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Implementation: The Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) was signed into law by Governor Newsom in October 2023. Assuming passage of the BHSA on the March 2024 ballot, the measure fundamentally reforms the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), a statewide initiative passed in 2004, that funds behavioral health programs through a 1 percent tax on high-earning Californians. The BHSA redirects 30 percent of MHSA funding to mental health-related housing programs while reconfiguring funding for prevention, early intervention, children and youth programs, and crisis treatment programs. Amendments were added to the legislation to allow counties greater flexibility to move funds between programs to support areas of critical need. Tied to the BHSA reforms is a \$6.4 billion housing bond that will go before voters as Proposition 1 on the March 2024 ballot.

If the Behavioral Health Services Act is enacted by voters in March, it will dramatically change how the State of California and county governments provide mental health programs. With such a seismic shift in programmatic structure, there will inevitably be a significant adjustment period. County behavioral health departments must now direct substantial funding to create new treatment beds and supportive housing. San Bernardino County will reconfigure its behavioral health programs to align with BHSA guidelines while strategically planning for new facilities to house and treat those with severe mental disorders.

7.3 – SB 43 Expanded Conservatorship for Severe Substance Use Disorders (SUD): Enacted in 2023, SB 43 makes significant changes to the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act by expanding the technical definition of gravely disabled. Under this new definition, Californians with a severe substance use disorder, or a co-occurring mental health disorder and a severe SUD, or chronic alcoholism are now eligible for involuntary conservatorships. Conservatorships give local agencies the important responsibility to house, treat, and provide an array of supportive services for those who are unable to provide for their own personal safety or necessary medical care. Many individuals with severe mental illness or substance use disorders that are also experiencing homelessness could be assigned to receive care and treatment through conservatorship.

San Bernardino County will advocate for ongoing state investments for expanded treatment services and housing options including locked facilities when appropriate, workforce assistance, community-based housing, and step-down transitional care.

7.4 – Streamlining the CalFresh Eligibility Process: With rising inflation and the increased cost of living, Californians are becoming more reliant on public assistance programs, especially to buy food. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is administered in California as CalFresh, providing monthly food benefits to low-income individuals and families. CalFresh is extremely difficult for local agencies to administer due to its complicated application and ongoing eligibility determination process.

San Bernardino supports streamlining the eligibility process to significantly reduce barriers for customers while alleviating the administrative burden on county staff. We support efforts that will enable counties to administer public assistance programs more effectively even with persistent staff shortages.

7.5 – Improvements to California Work Opportunity & Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs): CalWORKs is a public assistance program that provides cash aid and services to eligible California families. Due to discrepancies between federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and state CalWORKs program requirements, some California counties face fiscal sanctions for non-compliance with federal regulations. Penalizing counties is counterproductive as they face a choice of choosing to follow state directives or federal law.

San Bernardino County believes that any discrepancies with federal regulatory compliance should be resolved by the State of California, and not by local governments. The County will advocate for changes in federal policy to allow agencies administering the CalWORKs program to receive partial work participation credit for residents enrolled in the CalWORKs program.

7.6 – San Bernardino County Family Campus Project: County governments have struggled since the 2015 Continuum of Care reform to serve foster youth with complex needs such as serious medical, emotional, or behavioral conditions like schizophrenia, substance use disorders, psychosis, or suicidal ideation. Foster youth with complex needs often require more services than can be provided in a resource family home or other family-based setting. The curtailment of out-of-state placements for California's foster youth system has created an urgent need for county foster youth housing and care facilities. These facilities cannot be rapidly built, purchased, refurbished, or licensed. As a result, foster youth continue to spend long periods of time in county shelters, hospital settings or other facilities, including human services agency offices, as they await placement with a foster family.

The San Bernardino County Family Campus will be a supportive temporary housing facility that can provide services for children and families with complex needs. This new 60-unit facility will provide a residential treatment setting for substance addicted mothers and their children, deliver behavioral health and other services to children and youth with complex needs, and temporarily house former foster youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

State Budget Request to Build the San Bernardino County Family Campus: The County is requesting \$40 million in state budget funding for the construction of this new Family Campus that will provide critical services for families and foster youth. The Board of Supervisors urges Governor Newsom and state lawmakers to support this important request in the 2024-25 state budget. Completion of this new facility will greatly improve the housing resources available to support foster youth with complex needs as well as mothers recovering from substance use disorders.

Resources to Help Children and Youth with Complex Needs: San Bernardino County supports legislation that increases appropriate short and long-term placements, services, and resource options for children with complex needs and former foster youth who are victims of, or at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Additional Funding for Transitional Youth Housing: The County also supports funding for transitional youth housing projects, especially for those transitioning out of the foster care system or those experiencing homelessness.

7.7 – WIOA Reauthorization and Workforce Development: Enacted by Congress in 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to strengthen and improve America's public workforce. This important law helps Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, find high-quality jobs and careers. It also helps employers hire and retain skilled workers.

The County's Workforce Development Department uses WIOA funding to help job seekers find employment, obtain education and training, and access other services. The department also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

Principles to Improve WIOA: San Bernardino County supports the reauthorization of WIOA with updated provisions and resources to ensure that the nation has a skilled workforce for the future. Key principles to improve and strengthen WIOA include:

- **Local Control:** Continue local control and discretion over implementation of workforce training programs.
- **Funding Flexibility:** Provide flexibility in funding to states and local/regional workforce development boards to meet unique regional workforce needs.
- **Engagement with Employers:** Strengthen engagement efforts with local employers to retain businesses, provide on-the-job training and job placement services, and offset business closures through layoff prevention services.
- **Support for Career Centers:** Continue funding of career centers that provide jobseekers choices for occupational training and career pathway programs to meet strategic planning goals, and build a workforce customized to meet local demand and emerging sectors.
- **Upskilling Programs:** To adapt to the changing labor market, WIOA should include provisions for the development of skills in emerging industries. It should also support workers affected by automation and technological advancements through retraining programs.

- ***Internships and Apprenticeships:*** Invest in the future workforce, provide funding for initiatives that promote youth employment, internships, and apprenticeships.
- ***Address Barriers to Employment:*** Address systemic barriers that hinder the participation of marginalized communities, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Promote equity and inclusion in access to resources and the ability for San Bernardino County residents to achieve long-term employment and prosperity.
- ***Employment Assistance for Formerly Incarcerated:*** Support and fund effective workforce development and other service programs to assist formerly incarcerated individuals to find gainful employment.

7.8 – State Funding to Support First 5 Programs: First 5 is a coordinated system to provide nutrition, early education, and health assistance to California children. First 5 is supported by tax revenues from Proposition 10, a statewide initiative enacted in 1998 that taxes cigarettes. Due to decreasing tobacco use, the revenues supporting First 5 programs have steadily declined, threatening the program’s early childhood health, learning, and prevention initiatives. The County supports additional state funding for First 5 programs to offset the loss of Proposition 10 tax revenues.

7.9 – Veterans Affairs: San Bernardino County strongly supports the men and women who served in the armed forces. The County advocates for veterans to expeditiously receive the benefits they have earned and families of veterans to also receive their due benefits. The County supports the following policies:

Ongoing Funding for Veterans Benefits: Veterans benefits for healthcare, higher education, vocational training, and retirement pensions should be fully funded on an ongoing basis. Funding should also continue to support veterans’ assistance programs such as home loans, government life insurance, burial benefits, and supplemental income pensions for wartime veterans.

Benefit Funding for Disability Support, Surviving Spouses, and Children of Veterans: The County supports ongoing benefit programs such as compensation for service-related disabilities, surviving spouse benefits, and benefits for the children of veterans, and will advocate that they be fully funded.

Exemption of Retirement Pay and Annuity Payments from State Income Tax: The County supports new legislative proposals that will exempt retirement pay for veterans and annuity payments as part of a survivor benefit plan from state income tax.

Veterans Facilities in San Bernardino County: State and federal veterans care facilities in the County must be properly maintained and meet the needs of our local veterans.

Affordable Housing for Veterans: The County strongly supports the construction of new housing and availability of affordable housing units for homeless veterans.

Section 8: Arrowhead Regional Medical Center and Public Health

San Bernardino County owns and operates Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC), a 456-bed public safety-net hospital in Colton. ARMC provides more than 40 outpatient specialty care services, and operates a regional burn center, trauma center, a comprehensive stroke center, and four off-site family health clinics in Rialto, San Bernardino, Fontana, and Redlands. As much of ARMC's revenues come from Medicaid patients, policy decisions for this important federal program are critical to this County healthcare facility.

8.1 – Clear, Focused, and Limited Responsibilities for Public Health Departments: During the Covid-19 pandemic, county public health agencies were assigned new responsibilities, adding more tasks to an already substantial programmatic portfolio. These mandates are often unfunded, require new programs be initiated, impose additional reporting obligations, or enact challenging regulations that must be enforced. This incremental mission creep is an extraordinary burden for a public health workforce that is already short-staffed. When imposing future public health mandates, the County urges lawmakers to carefully consider the following:

Full Funding: Any new mandates for public health departments should be fully funded on an ongoing, permanent basis. If they cannot be fully funded in perpetuity, policymakers should carefully weigh whether this new directive is truly worth the cost to implement.

Unreasonable Administrative Burdens: When enacting new public health programs and responsibilities, policymakers should avoid placing overly burdensome administrative reporting requirements on local agencies or assigning unrealistic deadlines.

8.2 - Equity: San Bernardino County promotes the inclusion of marginalized groups and the elimination of racial disparities. The County supports legislation and policy proposals that result in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all, reduces or removes barriers for disadvantaged members of our community, and ensures that people with marginalized identities can grow, develop, and establish themselves in society.

8.3 – County Animal Care Services: San Bernardino County's Public Health Department cares for and supports abandoned, abused, or neglected dogs, cats, and other animals. The Animal Care Division provides services for unincorporated areas as well as the cities of Big Bear Lake, Highland, and Yucaipa. It also operates and maintains a regional animal shelter in Devore and is overseeing construction of a new modern shelter in Bloomington. County Animal Care staff are also active during emergencies and natural disasters to evacuate pets and livestock from danger.

Animal care is a vital function of County government – not only to preserve public health but as a fundamental stewardship to serve the many animals who rely on humans for food, shelter, medical care, and compassionate treatment. The County actively promotes pet adoptions to avoid any possible crowding in our shelters. It strives to educate residents on proper pet care and actively encourages owners to have their pets receive regular veterinary medical attention. The Board of Supervisors has allocated substantial resources to support the Animal Care Division and the ongoing services for all animals in County facilities. The Board will continue to fulfill this

important responsibility to ensure that all animals in the County's care receive excellent treatment.

8.4 – Opposition to Medicaid Funding Cuts for Disproportionate Share Hospitals (DSH):

Current federal law eliminates \$8 billion in DSH funding beginning October 1, 2023, and will continue through fiscal year 2027. These Medicaid DSH cuts will greatly harm safety net hospitals and could lead to many of them closing. The County opposes Medicaid DSH cuts for safety net hospitals and urges Congress to restore this critical funding.

8.5 – Arrowhead Regional Medical Center Homeless Street Medicine Initiative: ARMC provides health care treatment and assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness. The hospital is exploring ways to expand mobile healthcare services for homeless individuals, better known as street medicine. Providing onsite healthcare assistance eliminates transportation costs to the hospital while avoiding discharges into the City of Colton. ARMC will seek additional funding to successfully implement this street medicine initiative.

8.6 – Federal Designation of Essential Hospitals: Arrowhead Regional Medical Center and other public safety net hospitals provide medical care for uninsured, low-income patients and other residents who cannot afford private insurance. These public medical facilities provide up to five times as much uncompensated care as other hospitals. However, there is no clear way to distinguish these types of hospitals from private facilities. This is why the County strongly urges Congress to designate important public medical facilities as essential hospitals so they can receive more federal funding and thereby continue to provide greater access to healthcare for low-income residents.

8.7 - Maintaining the Managed Care Organization (MCO) Tax to Support Medi-Cal: The County strongly urges state lawmakers to maintain the purpose of the MCO tax to support public health care systems. The Board of Supervisors strongly opposes redirecting MCO tax revenues to pay for non-Medi-Cal state financial obligations. The MCO tax provides a revenue source to draw down federal matching dollars to support the Medi-Cal program. With Arrowhead Regional Medical Center's public service mandate and low-income payor mix, the County was relying on future MCO tax revenue to support health care services for our most vulnerable residents.

Section 9: Recreation and Environmental Conservation

San Bernardino County is uniquely beautiful, from the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains to Joshua Tree National Park in the vast Mojave Desert. The Board of Supervisors will continue to support the conservation of desert and mountain habitat to preserve endangered or protected species in full compliance with state and federal law. The County also strongly advocates for a balanced consideration of important human interests in rural communities such as flood control, wildfire mitigation, and development for healthcare facilities, schools, housing, and infrastructure. The State of California is too often dismissive or indifferent to the needs of rural communities when imposing new laws and mandates. The County will work with local lawmakers and state officials to better address this imbalance and will continue to strongly advocate for rural residents.

The County strongly supports recreation in the region and has invested substantial funds to expand and maintain its regional parks. The Board of Supervisors supports legislation and policies that expand recreational opportunities and fund additional improvements and amenities at County parks.

9.1 – Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act: San Bernardino County’s most famous native plant, the Western Joshua Tree (WJT), has been the focus of recent controversy over the effectiveness of the California Endangered Species Act. San Bernardino County has long protected the WJT in its development code and has actively sought to preserve this iconic desert species. In 2019, a petition was filed with the Fish and Game Commission to list the WJT as a California endangered species. A scientific review conducted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) completed in March 2022 found that the WJT, although facing threats from development and climate change, is widespread and abundant, with an estimated population in the tens of millions, and is in no danger of extinction for the foreseeable future. The review recommended that the Commission not list the WJT as a California endangered species. The commission split on listing the tree in a 2-2 vote, and urged CDFW to find a legislative solution that could better protect the species while avoiding listing the WJT as endangered.

As a result, CDFW introduced the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act as a budget trailer bill in the 2023 state legislative session. This legislation requires permits to remove or relocate WJTs, with substantial fees paid to the state depending on the size of the tree. It also limits the number of trees that can be removed to complete certain kinds of projects. Although the legislation allows CDFW to delegate authority to city and county governments to issue WJT takings permits for single-family and multi-family residences, accessory structures, and some public works projects, all commercial and industrial projects must seek permits from Sacramento. The County actively advocated for substantive changes to the legislation to expedite permitting, reduce mitigation fees, and make the law more workable for our residents. However, most of the County’s requested amendments were rejected.

CDFW has actively begun implementation of the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act and is discussing delegating authority to city governments to issue takings permits on behalf of the state. The County will continue to monitor the implementation of this new law and work with CDFW to enact improvements in future legislation.

9.2 – Air Quality Regulation: Advances in fuel efficiency, engine technology, and reductions in stationary greenhouse gas emissions have dramatically improved the air quality and health outcomes for Southern California. The County supports sensible, balanced air quality regulations that do not deter vital economic development in the region.

9.3 – Prop 70 Land Sale Revenues and Improvements at Prado Regional Park: San Bernardino County operates the 2,280-acre Prado Regional Park in Chino on a leasehold obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), all of which lies within the Corps’ Santa Ana River Main Stem/Prado Dam project area. The County is actively seeking to improve Prado Regional Park by expanding the park’s amenities to elevate the recreational experiences of park visitors.

The County used Proposition 70 grant funds to buy several properties in the Chino Agricultural Preserve to serve as future park and habitat conservation areas. Subsequent state legislation authorized the County to sell the lands purchased with Prop 70 funds and use the sale proceeds to acquire replacement property. The County supports measures that will provide greater flexibility in the use of Prop 70-derived land sale revenues to support future park amenities.

9.4 - Support for Outdoor Recreation and Parks: The Board of Supervisors supports legislation and funding that promote investments in outdoor recreation, including the development and maintenance of parks and trails, construction of recreational facilities, implementation of recreation programming, outdoor education programs, and the preservation and restoration of natural habitat.

9.5 - Effective Management of Federal Lands: San Bernardino County is the largest county by geographical size in the contiguous United States, with more than 80 percent of its land area owned and managed by the federal government. Our vast public lands support a range of economic and recreational uses from hiking and camping to grazing, mining, and more recently, renewable energy developments. The County supports federal efforts to:

Engage Local Agencies in Consultation on Federal Land Use Changes: The County supports robust and meaningful consultation and coordination with counties, tribes, local governments, and other stakeholders when considering any proposals for changes in land designation or to federal land management plans.

Streamline the Process for Desert Tortoise Incidental Take Permits: The County supports streamlining the process for approving incidental take permits on non-federal lands within the desert tortoise conservation area, providing for small project exemptions, and ensuring that any required mitigation efforts are appropriate to the size and scope of the proposed project.

Section 10: Land Use, Economic Development and Climate Resiliency

Land Use: The authority to plan for orderly growth and future development is essential to local government. Decisions made at the local level are closest to voters; top-down directives from Sacramento simply cannot account for the broad spectrum of local conditions and circumstances. The County will advocate to maintain local control and regulatory authority over land use, zoning, renewable energy siting, subdivisions, and annexations. It also supports state funding for brownfield clean up and restoration. The Board of Supervisors opposes any erosion of local land use authority. This includes air quality and climate change policies that restrict or revoke local land use authority or impose unfunded land use and general plan mandates.

10.1 - Reform of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Over the years, CEQA has become a legal device to stop or delay development projects, especially housing. To expedite housing construction, avoid unnecessary delays, and lower the costs generated by CEQA lawsuits, the County strongly supports CEQA reform efforts that streamlines the environmental review process without compromising environmental quality standards. This includes:

- **CEQA Exemptions:** Adopting statutory exemptions from environmental review for projects that clearly meet state and county housing development goals or provide essential homeless services.
- **Expedited Judicial Review:** Judicial review of CEQA challenges should have strict time limits that expedite the decision-making process, thereby enabling projects to proceed.

10.2 - Reform of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): The County supports legislative efforts to modernize the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This effort will simplify and streamline NEPA reviews, including environmental clearance reciprocity with CEQA, and expedite project completion.

10.3 - Renewable Energy Development: The County supports continued growth in renewable energy generation to achieve state and federal climate goals, while preserving the County's land use decision-making authority and preserving the unique character of rural communities. New developments must be consistent with existing land management plans.

10.4 - Improved Grid Reliability, Generation Capacity, and Electricity Affordability: Aging transmission towers and fallen power lines sparked the devastating 2018 Camp Fire in Northern California. To avoid similar wildfires in the future, major investments are needed to avoid power outages, minimize overloading the current electrical grid, and harden the grid to avoid future fires. The County supports investments that will improve grid infrastructure reliability and expand the state's local electricity generation capacity. These investments are critical to lower costs and improve electricity affordability in the state.

Economic Development: The County seeks to improve the local economy by attracting business investment, creating a skilled workforce, and reducing burdensome regulations. A growing diverse

economy should support small businesses and industries that generate good-paying jobs in the Inland Empire.

The Board of Supervisors supports legislation, budget actions, or proposals that will provide tax relief programs and incentives for business recruitment, retention, and expansion. It opposes regulations, taxes, and fees that unfairly target specific industries and harm the business competitiveness of the region or the state. Above all, the Board opposes anti-business policies that increase the cost of goods and services, making it more expensive to live in California.

10.5 - Economic Development: The County supports actions and policies that encourage local economic development and help to retain, expand, and recruit businesses to the region. Key policies the County **supports** include:

Expedited Permitting, Reduced Taxes and Fees, and Less Burdensome Regulation: Reducing red tape and permitting delays, lowering fees and taxes on businesses, and stopping onerous regulatory compliance will greatly improve California's business environment.

Support for Local Manufacturing: The County supports the expansion of manufacturing in the Inland Empire, as well as education and training programs to produce a highly skilled local workforce.

Tax Incentive Programs: The County supports federal and state tax relief programs such as the Investment Incentive Program to attract business development in historically disadvantaged areas of the state.

Promotional Marketing: Local governments should support marketing efforts to attract new businesses, tourists, visitors, and film production to their communities, thereby helping the local hospitality industry and promoting a positive image of the region.

Small Business Development Centers: The County supports ongoing federal funding for Small Business Development Centers to serve as a one-stop assistance resource for small business owners.

10.6 - Warehouses and Logistics Centers: Warehouse and logistics development has steadily grown over the last two decades in the Inland Empire, with one billion square feet of industrial warehouse space built in the region as of 2021. The logistics industry has generated important jobs and brought economic vitality to San Bernardino County, but it has also raised environmental and public health concerns about the siting of these warehouse facilities. It is important to note that most warehouse development in the region has occurred in city jurisdictions and not county unincorporated areas. San Bernardino County supports a balanced approach to warehouse development and encourages local agencies and policymakers to follow sensible land use policies to account for homes, schools, parks, and other nearby structures that may be impacted by logistics centers.

The County opposes legislation that imposes warehouse-related development restrictions on only the Inland Empire rather than applying statewide. Warehouses and logistics centers can be found in all parts of the state; therefore, any regulations or restrictions should apply statewide rather than singling out the Inland Empire and placing the region at a competitive disadvantage.

10.7 - Local Government Transition to Zero-Emission Vehicle Fleets: Recently enacted regulations from the California Air Resources Board have mandated local agencies transition to zero-emission vehicle fleets over the next decade. The County will advocate for financial assistance, flexibility in meeting transition timelines, and state financial support for the expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure to meet this ambitious goal.

10.8 - Climate Resiliency: The County supports policies and actions aimed at improving the resiliency of local water, flood, and road infrastructure to better cope with ongoing climate change. Additional funding and assistance will be necessary to assist local governments, especially rural communities, to withstand and adapt to these climate impacts. It is also critical that the State of California provide funding to enable local governments to comply with new state climate change and resiliency mandates.