

Inland Action State Legislative Issues 2025 - Detail

Economic Development Issues

Support proposed legislation that provides clarity, allows flexibility, and minimizes unintended negative outcomes for businesses, municipalities, and the environment.

As the only region with jurisdictions included in the definition of “Warehouse Concentration Region,” the Inland Empire is at the forefront of implementing AB 98 of 2024, through which the legislature set out priorities around land use as it relates to logistics and warehouse sites. Inland Action is appreciative of the legislature’s recognition that as we move towards implementation of those priorities, there is a need to clarify some of the language in that law. Municipalities and businesses alike need legislation that is free from ambiguity and that provides well-defined terms and timelines with regard to implementation and consequences. Companion legislation—AB 735 and SB 415—has begun to address these issues.

With regard to this legislation, Inland Action would like to express support for the suggested amendments proposed in a letter from the California Business Properties Association Coalition dated April 6, 2025, for the list of clean-up priorities identified jointly by the California League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties, and for the recommended changes proposed jointly by San Bernardino County Transportation Authority and Western Riverside Council of Governments. All three documents are attached to this package beginning immediately following page 18 for convenience. To meet the needs of the municipalities and business communities in the Inland Empire, the legislation must be amended to ensure fair enforcement and provide some flexibility for municipalities, particularly small cities with limited resources and cities within the warehouse concentration region without any new planned development. These recommendations maintain the goals of the original law but importantly include allowances for alternative compliance paths for circulation element updates, possible timeline extensions, stipulations that penalties would apply only in cases of bad faith, recognition of the unique circumstances that arise from building industrial development in more rural areas as well as urban infill sites, and refined enforcement and exemption criteria, including the section providing exemptions for existing sites. We encourage the legislature to make these changes needed to support the fair implementation of AB 98 of 2024 throughout the state.

Support legislation to address the property insurance crisis facing Californians.

California is confronting a critical property insurance crisis fueled by escalating wildfire risks, climate change, and a regulatory framework that has not kept pace with evolving challenges. Major insurers are withdrawing from high-risk areas, forcing homeowners into the under-resourced FAIR Plan. The problem is compounded for individuals who own mobile homes and businesses who are currently not covered by the protections the legislature has put in place for homeowners. This situation is destabilizing the housing market and leaving many Californians underinsured. In response, state leaders have initiated legislative and regulatory reforms aimed at stabilizing the insurance market, enhancing consumer protections, and promoting wildfire mitigation efforts.

Inland Action is in support of legislation that incentivizes insurers to recognize work done by homeowners and communities to mitigate the threats and effects of wildfires, expands protection from being dropped based solely on zip codes to businesses, expands and enhances the California FAIR plan enable it to fulfill its mission as an effective safety net, and streamlines and increases transparency in the regulatory process.

California's property insurance crisis necessitates a multifaceted response that balances market stability with consumer protections. By implementing the proposed legislative and regulatory measures, the state can work towards a more resilient and equitable insurance landscape. Continued collaboration among lawmakers, regulators, insurers, and consumers is essential to address the challenges ahead.

Legislation to be aware of:

- SB 616 (Rubio) establishes the Community Hardening Commission within the Department of Insurance with the task of creating and maintaining wildfire community hardening standards to reduce fire risk and improve access to fire insurance.
- SB 547 (Perez and Rubio) proposes extending nonrenewal and cancellation moratoriums to commercial properties in areas affected by declared emergencies, including homeowners' associations and affordable housing units.
- SB 525 (Jones) expands FAIR Plan Coverage to include manufactured and mobile homes by redefining "basic property insurance"
- AB 238 (Harabedian) requires mortgage servicers to offer forbearance and prohibits assessing late fees or charging default rates following wildfire disasters.

Invest in programs with demonstrated success producing and preserving affordable housing through the State Budget and proposed Wicks/Cabaldon Housing Bond (AB 736 and SB 417).

California has set a goal to produce over 2.5 million new homes by 2030, over 1 million of which need to be affordable to meet the need for safe, decent, and affordable housing. Fortunately, tens of thousands of new affordable housing units are shovel-ready statewide (March 2025 Enterprise Report). The biggest barrier to the production of these units is the lack of adequate, stable financing. Investing in housing not only addresses a critical need, but it also creates jobs and stimulates important infrastructure investments and other economic benefits for the surrounding neighborhoods. This year, home builders are being pinched from all sides as interest rates remain high, costs continue to increase, all while the programs to fund affordable housing were not included in the Governor's January Budget proposal. Investment in housing solutions is needed now more than ever.

Inland Action asks legislators to restore funding for housing in the State Budget and the effort to bring a \$10 billion statewide housing bond to voters in 2026. In both the Budget and Bond discussions, Inland Action urges legislatures to fund programs with demonstrated success in producing and preserving housing. These programs include: the State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, the State's flagship Multifamily Housing Program, the Infill Infrastructure Grant Program, and CAL HOME.

In addition to budget advocacy on the above programs, Inland Action urges support on the following bills:

- AB 736 (Wicks) and SB 417 (Cabaldon), the proposed \$10 billion housing bond
- AB 726 (Avila Farias) and AB 670 (Quirk-Silva) are intended to encourage local investment in the preservation of deed-restricted affordable housing by allowing for the inclusion in the general plan housing element annual report affordable units that had affordability deed restrictions placed or extended after the development of the property due to their being substantially rehabilitated with funds awarded by the municipality.

Solution for unpaid debt owed to the federal government for funds borrowed during COVID to keep unemployment insurance funds solvent.

During the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, California—like many other states—borrowed funds from the federal government to sustain its Unemployment Insurance (UI) Fund. While most states have since repaid these loans, California’s debt remains unresolved. As of now, the state still owes approximately \$20 billion, with no apparent plan in place for repayment.

This inaction has several negative consequences, with the most impactful being a federal unemployment tax increase that has been triggered for California employers. This tax, assessed as a flat fee per employee, will continue to rise annually until the debt is repaid. The structure of this tax is regressive—it disproportionately impacts industries that employ large numbers of lower-wage workers and penalizes regions with lower average salaries. The Inland Empire is unfairly burdened by this assessment, as it is home to many of these industries and wage levels. Additionally, failure to repay the debt not only prolongs financial strain but also increases the overall cost through accruing interest. These interest payments divert critical general fund dollars away from other essential services and programs that are already underfunded.

Perhaps most concerning about this issue is the lack of legislative or policy dialogue surrounding this issue. The silence on such a critical financial obligation is symptomatic of a broader neglect of the Unemployment Insurance Fund’s long-term health. Without proactive planning and reform, the system remains vulnerable to future economic shocks. The health of California’s UI Fund is a matter of vital importance to both employers and workers.

Inland Action urges our regional delegation to start and lead solution-based discussions on this issue. It is time to propose a clear, equitable strategy to repay the federal debt and to establish a more sustainable framework for the UI Fund moving forward. A responsible plan will not only relieve the growing financial burden on California’s businesses but will also restore confidence in the stability of the state’s unemployment safety net.

Education Issues

Investing in Access: Safeguarding California's Higher Education Future 2025-26 BUDGET

ISSUE: The California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems face significant financial challenges due to the persistent state funding deficit, threatening the quality of education provided at CSU's 23 campuses and UC's 10 campuses and health centers. We advocate for measures to preserve the full funding of CSU and UC and to avoid a proposed 7.95% CSU reduction and a 7.95% UC reduction in FY 25-26, including the deferrals outlined in the outyear compacts.

We want to share our concerns about how an 8% cut will negatively impact our CSU and UC Systems and specifically our California State University San Bernardino campus and UC Riverside Campus. This proposed cut will impact on academics, student services, course offerings and our workforce. It will also put recent graduation rate and enrollment gains at risk, which will lessen the CSU's and UC's positive impact on our state's economy. The consequences of these cuts, if enacted, are the following.

As we advocate for the stability and advancement of public higher education in California, we also recognize the interconnected roles of our region's public and private nonprofit institutions. In the Inland Empire, campuses like California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB), UC Riverside (UCR), and numerous independent colleges and universities collaborate to expand access, uplift underserved communities, and strengthen the region's economic vitality.

Together, these institutions educate tens of thousands of Inland Empire students, many of whom are first-generation, low-income, or returning adult learners. They share a deep commitment to equity, student success, and workforce development—preparing future educators, healthcare professionals, engineers, and civic leaders.

Investments in this collective ecosystem—CSU, UC, and nonprofit independent colleges—reflect an inclusive, cost-effective approach to ensuring California's diverse student population can succeed and thrive.

ACTION: We ask support of the CSU and UC funding requests to avoid further budget cuts and restore state compact funding to the CSU and UC systems.

Specifically, we request your support for the following actions:

- **Urge the Governor** to propose a policy change in his January budget proposal to avoid the proposed budget cuts and restore full state compact funding for the CSU and UC systems.
- **Advocating During the budget cycle to** Support CSU and UC funding restoration in the May Budget Revision or the Final FY 2025-26 budget to be adopted in September 2025.

BACKGROUND: For the FY 2024-25 budget, the Governor proposed no expansions to student financial aid or base funding increases for the CSU and UC. Instead, the 5% base increase was deferred to FY 2025-26, with a promise of one-time back payments. Additionally, \$2.4 billion in one-time reductions were made to higher education initiatives. The FY 2025-26 budget proposes a further \$397 million ongoing reduction to CSU's and UC's baseline funding, equivalent to the resources needed to support 36,000 students at CSU and 24,800 students in total at UC.

The CSU and UC anticipates this ongoing reduction in 2025-26, equivalent to 5% of the Operating Fund. Compounding this issue, the California Department of Finance projects a state General Fund budget gap of 6.5% in 2026-27 and 8% in 2027-28. This poses significant concern, as the state General Fund serves as a critical revenue source for the CSU and UC Operating Funds.

Federal higher education policy has shifted toward reduced funding and increased oversight, with significant impacts on access, equity, and institutional autonomy. Proposed and enacted budget cuts have frozen billions in federal grants and contracts to major universities, particularly those accused of failing to address campus antisemitism, prompting concerns over academic freedom and political targeting. Efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, limit diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and overhaul accreditation processes have further challenged institutions' ability to serve diverse student populations. These actions disproportionately affect low-income, first-generation, and minority students while disrupting research, innovation, and workforce development efforts essential to the region and nation's economic future.

The proposed cuts would have severe consequences. Systemwide, they would result in reductions to academic programs, student services, and course offerings, as well as a decline in workforce capacity. Progress in closing equity gaps and improving graduation rates are jeopardized, directly impacting CSU's and UC's standings as national leaders in economic mobility. These cuts would also exacerbate enrollment declines and threaten the financial stability of the CSU and the UC systems, which are vital to California's workforce and economy.

Several CSU universities have experienced a significant decline in student enrollment, resulting in a loss of tuition revenue, a key source of the CSU Operating Fund. Over the past two years, the CSU system faced substantial financial challenges, with gaps between anticipated revenue and expenditures for CSU amounting to \$138 million in 2023-24 and \$218 million in 2024-25. These ongoing shortfalls, totaling 4% of the Operating Fund for CSU which highlight the pressing need for strategic solutions.

UC system has met and exceeded the enrollment expectations outlined in the compact. UC campus costs, particularly for academic represented employees and all employees' health care, have outpaced inflation. In addition, while the tuition stability plan has been great for our students and their families, during the implementation period, having tuition increases for only 25% of undergraduates annually has not covered the full cost increases in proportion to the operating expenses covered by tuition. These factors have resulted in operating deficits for UC in the Regents budget plan as follows:

- 2023-24 deficit of \$67.9 million
- 2024-25 deficit of \$69.9 million
- 2025-26 projected deficit of \$504.7 million (includes 7.95% cut and not receiving compact funding)

CSUSB Impact:

At CSU San Bernardino (CSUSB), the financial challenges are particularly troubling. The majority of CSUSB students are first-generation college students, with 79% of students being the first in their families to attend college. These students rely heavily on accessible and affordable higher education to transform their lives and contribute to their communities. In FY 2023-24, CSUSB

experienced an \$11 million budget gap, leading to 5% cuts across all budgets. For FY 2024-25, the gap increased to \$21 million, resulting in a 9% cut and the elimination of fourteen positions. Looking ahead to FY 2025-26, the proposed budget cuts will create an \$18 million gap.

The cumulative budget deficit of \$50 million over three years will force further workforce and programmatic reduction at a time when no other areas remain to be cut. These ongoing deficits threaten CSUSB's ability to serve its diverse student body and maintain operational effectiveness.

Despite these financial pressures, the CSU and CSUSB remain committed to student success through unprecedented investments in financial aid, student support services, and evidence-based strategies that prioritize student needs. The CSU has made notable progress in reducing persistent equity gaps and was recently ranked #3 nationally for improving economic mobility. However, these efforts are taking place against the backdrop of rising and unavoidable operational costs, underscoring the urgency for sustained innovation and support.

UCR Impact:

Throughout its long history, the University of California has been an important partner to the State in transmitting knowledge, making discoveries, and serving the people of California. UC Riverside values diversity and inclusivity, and student success which is reflected in its students, staff, and faculty who make contributions to our campus, region, state, and the world.

UCR enrolls more than 26,300 students including undergraduate and graduate students. UCR is the academic home of over 1,100 faculty, including 2 Nobel Prize Winners, 3 Guggenheim Awards, 4

UC University Professorships, and 30 National Academies Members. Of all the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU) members in Southern California, UC Riverside is the most affordable option based on cost of living, Pell and other Federal Grants awarded. Nearly 50% of UCR's undergraduates receive a Pell Grant. In 2024, UCR was again named the No. 1 university in the nation for social mobility by U.S. News & World Report. This is the sixth year that U.S. News has featured a breakout category for social mobility, which considers the degree to which a university elevates its low-income graduates to a higher standard of living. The first three years, UCR was ranked No. 1 in the nation among four-year universities; for the past two years, it was No. 2.

During this challenging budget year, UC and UCR look forward to working with the Governor and the legislature to ensure that the University's contributions to California continue through strong innovation, education of the future workforce, and public service that uplifts all Californians. The University remains committed to the shared goals of access, affordability, student success, and intersegmental collaboration outlined in the compact.

The UC Regents budget request is focused on protecting and expanding State investment in the University's students, innovation, and public services. Expenditure elements of the budget plan include those related to undergraduate and graduate enrollment growth, sustaining core University operations, and expanding access to a debt-free educational pathway for California resident undergraduates.

The University of California requests approval of the investments detailed below.

- Reject 7.95% Reduction to the Ongoing Base Budget: \$396 million
- Request Additional Ongoing Funding: \$280 million
- Request One-time Capital Outlay Funding: \$1.36 billion

Investing in the CSU and UC systems is not an expense - it is an investment in California's future, driving equity and economic growth. CSU serves over 460,000 students annually and contributes \$15 billion to the state's economy every year. The UC system serves more than 295,000 students annually, and has 265,000 faculty and staff, with 2.0 million alumni living and working around the world. Beyond contributing to groundbreaking research and excellence in higher education, UC generates \$82 billion in economic activity per year nationally. And UC-related spending and activities support more than 500,000 jobs across California. Sustained funding for the CSU and UC will secure the future of its students and continue to ensure prosperity for our region and state.

Support the Role of Independent California Colleges and Universities

As we work to safeguard the futures of our public institutions, we also recognize the critical contributions of California's nonprofit independent colleges and universities (ICCU). Represented by the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), more than 80 member institutions serve over 346,000 students statewide—including 184,200 undergraduates—providing essential access to higher education in nearly every region of California.

These institutions are especially vital to low-income and first-generation college students:

- Nearly 25,000 Cal Grant recipients attend AICCU member campuses, with 51% identifying as Latino and 48% as first-generation.
- ICCUs deliver an average of \$24,000 per student in institutional grant aid annually, significantly reducing reliance on student loans.
- ICCUs play a disproportionately large role in training California's critical workforce, including producing:
 - 39% of new teacher credential holders
 - 51% of new nurses
 - Over 90% of new mental health professionals and counselors

ACTION: To ensure continued equity in access and student success across all sectors, we join AICCU in urging the Legislature to:

1. Despite several modest increases in recent years, the Cal Grant award for students attending private nonprofit colleges remains \$350 lower than in 2001. Restoring this award to \$9,708 would address this inequity and provide essential financial support to over 25,000 Cal Grant recipients at private nonprofit colleges. At a modest cost of \$8.8 million, this investment aligns with the state's goals around college access and affordability and provides direct financial support to a population of students that is predominantly Latino (51%) or Black (16%).

This is an important investment that restores the award to its previous high-water mark. Looking forward, we must work together to return to a policy of setting the award amount

through a formula, rather than through discretionary investments that ebb and flow based on state budget conditions.

2. Extend Cal Grant Portability to Nontraditional Transfer Students at ICCUs Allocating \$13.2 million to remove artificial barriers for nontraditional students transferring from California Community Colleges to ICCUs would empower 1,200 students annually to complete their education in high-demand fields like healthcare, education, and behavioral health.
3. Independent nonprofit colleges not only complement the public higher education systems but also do so at a lower cost to the state. The average state investment per Cal Grant recipient at an ICCU is \$8,605.

Together—with support for CSU, UC, and ICCUs—we can ensure that California maintains a robust, inclusive, and cost-effective system of higher education that delivers on the promise of opportunity, equity, and prosperity for all.

Environment Issues

Support for Increased Funding for Water Supply, Water Quality, and Water Storage Projects

Diverse sources of water supplies, increased water storage capacity and enhanced resilience to drought are high priorities to maintain and grow California's economy. Inland Action supports actions to implement measures that improve California's water reliability and drought preparedness, including support for budget proposals for water infrastructure and drought response investments. Inland Action recognizes the tremendous investment the State and local water purveyors have made in infrastructure to build capacity and resilience. Southern California is well positioned but still requires investment in its water infrastructure. The recent winter storms throughout California have underscored the need for continued investment in water infrastructure. Improved water infrastructure might have mitigated flooding impacts in Northern and Central California and would have provided additional, reliable water resources for anticipated drought periods in Southern California. Inland Action supports State efforts to fund water and wastewater infrastructure, water reliability projects, and water conveyance projects.

- **Support for SB 72 (Caballero) – The California Water Plan:** Inland Action supports the adoption of SB 72, a bipartisan bill which would revise provisions relating to the California Water Plan, requiring updates that would benefit all of California and address our critical water needs. The changes would modernize the Plan and help California address climate challenges while ensuring the needs of urban and rural communities are met. Rather than managing for scarcity, the adoption of the bill would set the state on a path toward a focus on meeting needs through the establishment of water supply targets. We ask legislators to pass SB 72, just as they passed SB 366 last session.
- **Support for Delta Conveyance Project:** Water reliability is a vital issue for the inland Southern California, including for major local state water contractors such as the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and Mojave Water Agency. Inland Action supports upgrading the state's infrastructure to improve conveyance in the Delta and ensure more reliable long-term water deliveries for the State Water

Project, which provides 30 percent of Southern California's water. Inland Action supports continued state funding, expedited permitting, and support for the Delta Conveyance Project.

- **Support for Sites Reservoir Project:** Inland Action supports continued state funding, expedited permitting, and support for the Sites Reservoir Project. The project will capture and store stormwater flows from the Sacramento River for release when needed, creating an additional 1.5 million acre feet of storage. When constructed, and operated in conjunction with the Northern California reservoirs, the project will increase the flexibility, reliability, and resiliency of the State's water system.

Support for Efforts to Streamline and Reform CEQA

Inland Action supports the efforts by the independent Little Hoover Commission to review and evaluate the impact of CEQA. Inland Action recognizes that CEQA has played an important role in promoting environmental quality by enhancing the understanding of the environmental impacts of decisions. However, Inland Action also recognizes that CEQA abuse is rife and that CEQA has too often been used as a tool to prevent or slow certain types of development, ultimately increasing housing and other living costs for Californians. Inland Action encourages our state legislators to implement the targeted reforms recommended by the Little Hoover Commission. Specifically, Inland Action encourages the State to implement the following recommendations: strengthen the requirements needed to sue for alleged violations of the law by adopting the standing requirement of the National Environmental Protection Act; limit the submission of public input that occurs after a public comment period to prevent "document dumps" on public agencies; and exempt all infill housing from CEQA review to help alleviate the housing crisis.

In the current legislature, there are a number of bills that would streamline the CEQA process for important projects and infrastructure. Inland Action, therefore, encourages support for the following bills:

- AB 35 (Alvarez) – This bill would implement permit streamlining for clean hydrogen transportation projects, including requiring determination on the sufficiency of an application within 30 days and complete processing of CEQA permitting within 270 days of the application. The bill would also require expedited judicial review.
- AB 941 (Zbur) – This bill would implement permit streamlining for electrical infrastructure projects using the same metrics as proposed by AB 35 above (and consistent with other streamlining exceptions under state law).
- AB 295 (Macedo) – This bill allows the Governor to certify water storage, water conveyance, and groundwater recharge projects for permit streamlining (similar to how the Governor may certify certain housing, renewable energy, and clean energy manufacturing projects under the Jobs and Economic Improvement Through Environment Leadership Act of 2021).
- AB 1456 (Bryan) – This bill exempts vegetation fuel management projects from CEQA. The exemption will have several commonsense exceptions and requirements to protect the environment and sensitive species.

Healthcare Issues

California's Healthcare System in Jeopardy: Urgent Need for Thoughtful Action Amid OHCA Decisions and Federal Funding Threats

California's healthcare system—and the hospitals that sustain it—are under serious threat due to hasty, ill-considered decisions by the Office of Health Care Affordability (OHCA) and looming Medicaid/Medi-Cal cuts at the federal level.

Since the onset of the pandemic, inflation in California has surged by 21%. Despite this, OHCA has set arbitrary statewide cost growth targets for hospitals between 3% and 3.5%, with some institutions expected to operate under even tighter limits of 1.6% to 1.8%. These rigid caps demonstrate a troubling disconnect from the economic pressures hospitals face—particularly rising labor, pharmaceutical, and operational costs.

Rather than offering sustainable solutions, this cost cap approach severely limits hospitals' ability to cover expenses, break even, or maintain the modest operating margins essential for reinvestment in staff, equipment, and infrastructure. Nearly half of California hospitals already operate at a loss, and another 12% barely break even.

The Inland Empire, already facing significant healthcare disparities, is especially at risk. Many hospitals in our region serve our most vulnerable populations—including seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities—while caring for a high proportion of low-income patients. These hospitals are also among the largest local employers. Funding reductions would force difficult decisions: potential layoffs, service cuts in emergency care, maternal health, and mental health, and delays in critical technology upgrades. The region already struggles with long wait times and a shortage of specialty care; further destabilization would only deepen these access issues.

Even more concerning, OHCA has advanced these spending targets without a comprehensive analysis of uncontrollable cost factors—most notably the \$100 billion seismic retrofitting mandate required by 2030. While over 98% of hospitals have met the 2020 seismic safety standards, the next phase—ensuring post-earthquake operability—is significantly more complex and costly. These unfunded mandates, combined with the newly mandated \$25/hour minimum wage for healthcare workers and chronic underfunding from Medicare and Medi-Cal, create a financial burden few hospitals can sustain.

Currently, Medi-Cal reimburses hospitals at just 80% of the actual cost of care. The core reimbursement rate has not increased in 13 years. The system has only remained viable thanks to temporary increases in federal matching funds. With over one-third of Californians enrolled in Medi-Cal—and 45% of San Bernardino County and 42% of Riverside County residents dependent on the program—any reduction in federal support would have devastating consequences.

Hospitals cannot survive when the cost of care consistently exceeds reimbursement. While federal matching funds do not close that gap, they help soften the blow of chronic underfunding. These matches are now under threat. In the past, hospitals also relied on cost-shifting to commercial insurers to help cover losses—but this model is no longer sustainable, especially for rural and safety-net hospitals that serve few commercially insured patients.

We remain deeply committed to the principle of healthcare affordability and are eager to partner with OHCA and other stakeholders to develop meaningful, long-term solutions. However, setting spending targets without addressing the actual drivers of rising costs will only worsen access, quality, and equity across California's healthcare system.

We strongly urge OHCA to pause implementation, conduct a thorough and transparent analysis, and engage in meaningful dialogue with hospitals and communities before finalizing hospital-specific growth targets or labeling facilities as "high cost." Likewise, we call on state and federal leaders to protect Medi-Cal and ensure our healthcare system has the resources it needs to serve all Californians. Without timely action, the state's most vulnerable residents will be left without access to the care they deserve.

Judiciary Issues

Funding of Judicial Positions as Identified for Both San Bernardino and Riverside Counties is Critical

The Inland Empire is the most under-resourced area in the state when it comes to judicial resources for the state trial courts, severely negatively impacting the 4.6 million residents' access to justice. The Judicial Council of California conducts periodic assessments of judicial needs of the state's trial courts, based on objective caseload of each of the 58 trial courts in the state. The 2022 survey found that Riverside County needed 22 additional Superior Court judges beyond its authorized strength, surpassed in the state only by San Bernardino County, which was found to need an additional 27 Superior Court judges. Presently, Riverside County has only 80% of the trial judges the Judicial Council determined its caseload warrants. San Bernardino is even more impacted, having only 77% of the trial judges it needs.

In 2023, the Legislature addressed this need, but only on paper. SB 75 created additional judgeships for both counties, but those positions were expressly "subject to appropriation." That appropriation has yet to be provided, however. Judicial positions that are created but not funded cannot be filled and cannot therefore get to work resolving the cases of these growing communities. We urge the Legislature to finish the job by funding these positions as soon as possible. Prior to 2023, the previous substantial creation of new judgeships for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties was in 2007. Those positions were not fully funded, however, until 2022 via SB 154. The situation simply cannot wait 15 years to be addressed. Those positions need to be funded now in order to provide the people of the Inland Empire comparable access to justice as is enjoyed by their fellow citizens elsewhere in the State.

High Desert Justice Center Urgently Needed

More is needed, however, than more judges because there is also a critical lack of physical space for the Courts to do their work. Nowhere is this more acute than in the High Desert community in San Bernardino County. The Judicial Council determined the building housing the Superior Court in Victorville to be insufficient in 1998. Yet the Court still serves the High Desert community from that building – as best it can – from that building today. Not only has the building not been replaced, but the population it serves has doubled since that time.

The result is that the physical space simply cannot meet the needs of the Court in serving the community. Much of the Court's work there is on criminal matters. To create more capacity for

such cases, the Court recently had to transfer an entire adult criminal department an hour down the hill to Rancho Cucamonga and also transfer Victorville family-law cases 35 miles east to Barstow. The additional travel time to these new locations often effectively prevents parties, witnesses, and family members from attending the court proceedings in light of the high economic distress and low availability of public transit in the High Desert community.

It is also not just an issue of the lack of courtrooms. The holding cells in Victorville for in-custody defendants are so deficient that many inmates have to be housed for their hearings in jury boxes within the courtrooms rather than in the holding cells, or on the Sheriff's transport buses. Sometimes in-custody defendants cannot even be brought to Court at all, quite literally depriving them of their day in court. In addition, the situation vastly increases the danger to other inmates, court staff, jurors, victims, and other members of the public with business in the courthouse. In fact, in-custody defendants have to be walked through the same hallways as court staff and judges use to traverse the building. Thus, a judge can sometimes impose sentence on a defendant, then at the end of a long day walk out of his or her courtroom or chambers to their car right past that same defendant.

The need for new physical court space for the High Desert is a true emergency and must be addressed right away. The current estimate is that if this project was the top priority on the Judicial Council's building list (it is not), a new facility would not open for another 10 years. With its current priority in the teens on that list, the estimate is 20 years to completion. This need has already existed for 27 years, however – since the building was found insufficient in 1998. The situation simply cannot linger for another 20 years. Local officials from the Superior Court and the County are acutely aware of the situation and are doing all they can to address it, but Superior Courthouses are a State responsibility. The assistance of the Legislature and the Judicial Council is acutely and urgently needed. Nothing less than basic access to justice for millions of people in San Bernardino County – one of the fastest-growing areas of the State, is at stake.

Transportation Issues

Prioritize Transportation Infrastructure by Preserving SB1 Funding & Planning for Future Funding

A strong, modern, and safe transportation system is the basis of a thriving economy and only helps chart the path for installation of much needed clean energy infrastructure.

Gas Tax Alternative Solution - The gas tax is a diminishing source due to the State's goal of decarbonizing mobility. While revenues have not been severely affected to date, the ban on the sale of internal combustion engines is only a decade away. A replacement funding mechanism needs to be in place well before that date. A Road User Charge (RUC) is most often referenced as the replacement, but it has serious drawbacks. The cost of collecting the RUC has been estimated to be 10-12% of the revenue generated, when the cost of collecting the gas tax is less than 1% of gross revenues. Any alternative to the gas tax as a funding source for transportation projects needs to be equitable for low-income residents and those living in rural areas and communities with more affordable housing options.

Protect SB1 Funding - The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 was signed into law on April 28, 2017, with very specific intentions of investing over \$5 Billion annually to fix roads,

freeways and bridges in communities across California while generating funds for transit and safety. Key programs included the Trade Corridor Enhancement Program and Solutions for Congestion Corridors. The Inland Empire region of Southern California is now the 12th largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States, and it is expected to add over 1 million people in the next twenty-five years, and it is the goods movement gateway to the rest of the United States. The Inland Empire must continue to advance priority infrastructure projects to address immediate and necessary safety and freight related improvements. Preserve the original intent of SB1 by ensuring the CAPTI guidelines under development account for the need to continue to advance safety and freight related projects without adding mitigation requirements that would make these critical projects cost prohibited.

AB 914 (Garcia) – Air Pollution: Indirect Sources and Toxic Air Contaminants: Oppose

Inland Action has long supported advancements in improving air quality for all Californians. As our transportation providers and agencies continue to innovate and accelerate new and emerging technologies across sectors, they already operate under an extensive framework of federal, state, and local environmental regulations. AB 914 would add a new statewide layer of indirect source regulation (ISR) and fees that would duplicate existing programs, create conflicting compliance obligations, and divert or redirect transportation funds and resources away from critical safety and sustainability projects. ISR's have not proven to be an effective emissions reduction tool and place an additional tax on businesses and transportation providers already navigating challenging times. Inland Action supports collaborative strategies with input from transportation providers and agencies that can achieve meaningful reductions with positive outcomes for people, goods, and services that need to keep moving.



RE:AB 735 (Carrillo), As Amended & SB 415 (Reyes), As Amended – AB 98 Warehouses - TECHNICAL FIX - NO POSITION - Suggested Amendments Provided

On behalf of the organizations listed above, we appreciate your efforts to address the uncertainty surrounding AB 98 (Carrillo & Reyes; Chapter 931, 2024) through AB 735 and SB 415. Ensuring clarity and predictability for impacted stakeholders is

critical, and we recognize that these measures aim to refine technical issues related to implementation in a way that balances the intent of the original bill and regulatory objectives with practical application.

We appreciate the recent technical amendments made to AB 735 and SB 415, which represent a step in the right direction and reflect your continued commitment to addressing outstanding issues. AB 98 introduced significant new requirements for the logistics, warehouse, agricultural, and manufacturing sectors, and while the broader framework remains, key areas still require additional refinement. We remain committed to ongoing dialogue to resolve these issues and ensure effective implementation.

We look forward to continued discussions to ensure that necessary adjustments effectively address the following key issues:

1. Effective Dates and Exemptions: Clarify which current and future projects are governed by the law.
2. Redevelopment and Infill: Address the impact on infill, urban, and redevelopment projects, including a brownfield exclusion for existing industrial assets requiring updates.
3. Expansion Threshold: Clarify the language on existing building expansion, including the applicability of the 20% threshold and whether expansion includes demolition and reconstruction.
4. Buffers, Orientation & Internal Circulation: Provide clarity on buffers, building orientation, landscape and screening requirements, drive aisles, loading bays, cross-dock issues, and internal circulation.
5. Truck Routes: Resolve issues related to local government burdens, timeline concerns, rural routes, and enforcement mechanisms.
6. Exemptions for Critical Sectors: Consider clarifications or exemptions for industries that may not align with traditional logistics uses.
7. Housing Replacement: Clarify replacement and fair share requirements, particularly in distinguishing affordable versus market-rate housing and determining responsibility for development.
8. Enforcement: Define enforcement mechanisms to provide consistency and avoid unnecessary legal disputes.
9. Definitions & Consistency: Address ambiguous terms, ensure clarity for multi-building projects, and align dates and terminology for consistency.

Finally, we have provided under separate cover, a document that pulls together language from many different stakeholders that would help implement these technical fixes. The language has been reviewed by attorneys and local officials and companies that are directly involved in the entitlement processes to provide a base technical document that assures less technical issues in areas that get addressed moving forward.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on these legislative efforts and look forward to continued engagement to ensure that any adjustments made reflect a balanced and effective approach.

For additional information, please contact Skyler Wonnacott, California Business Properties Association (CBPA), at (916) 960-3951 or swonnacott@cbpa.com.

Thank you for your continued collaboration.

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April 3, 2025

Via Electronic Submission

The Honorable Eloise Reyes
California State Senate
1021 O St. Suite 7210
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 735 (Carrillo) & SB 415 (Reyes) – AB 98 Warehouses - Suggested Amendments to AB 98: Planning and zoning: logistics use: truck routes

Dear Senator Reyes:

On behalf of the member jurisdictions in San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) and Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG), we appreciate your efforts to address the uncertainty surrounding AB 98 (Carrillo & Reyes; Chapter 931, 2024) through AB 735 and SB 415. Starting in November, SBCTA and WRCOG began working together to help our member agencies, especially those jurisdictions in the Warehouse Concentration Region, to understand the requirements and implement general plan and municipal code changes by the deadline of January 1, 2026. To effectively conduct outreach pursuant to Section 65302 (f) and (g), meeting the deadline can be challenging and may result in a less robust engagement process. In addition to the implementation deadline, our member agencies are struggling to understand some of the bill's requirements. We would greatly appreciate your consideration of the attached redlines, which aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Include a Safe Harbor provision for cities that are in the process of updating their circulation/mobility elements or provide them with the option to adopt a truck route ordinance that can be incorporated into the circulation element during the next update.
- Clarify effective dates, entitlement processing requirements, and process for exemptions
- Provide clear definitions for terms in the Bill, and to the extent possible, use consistent meanings for terms defined in other sections of the California Government Code
- Simplify bill (and future-proof it from inconsistencies) by referring to the Green Building Code, MUTCD, and other regularly updated codes and regulations
- Make the housing replacement and displacement policy consistent with the Housing Crisis Act requirements

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on these legislative efforts and look forward to continued engagement to ensure that any adjustments made reflect the comments made by the cities we represent in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

For additional information, please contact Otis Greer, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, at (909) 884-8276 or ogreer@gosbcta.com.



AB 98 (2024): Legislative Clean Up Priorities

1. **Ensure there is flexibility for local governments to realistically meet the circulation element update requirements**
 - A. Amend Government Code Section 65098.1 and Section 65302.02 to modify the circulation element update to allow a local government to meet the requirements through a local plan or ordinance with the same standards
 - *This would create flexibility to meet the circulation element requirements*
 - B. Amend Government Code Section 65098.1 and 65302.02 to remove the circulation element update if a local government does not have any proposed new or expanded logistic use development
 - C. Amend Government Code Section 65098.1 to clarify the circulation element requirements are non-substantive to prevent the mobility requirements from being triggered in this specific update
 - *This aims to prevent the principles of the Federal Highway Administration's Safe System Approach and development of bicycle plans from being included in the AB 98 circulation element update, which is triggered by "any substantive revision of the circulation element on or after January 1, 2025." [65302(b)(2)(B)] [For reference from SB 932 (2022)]*
 - D. Amend Government Code Section 65098.1 to allow additional time for the circulation element update for smaller cities and counties
 - *Counties with populations with less than 100,000, including each city within that county, is exempt from the circulation element update*
 - *Counties with populations of 100,000 to 600,000, including each city within that county, have delayed implementation of the circulation element update to January 2030*
2. **Clarify in Government Code Section 65302.02 that penalties for violating the circulation element updates are only if local agencies have not made good faith effort**
3. **Revise Government Code Section 65098.2.7 and Section 65302.02(b)(3) to ensure accessibility of local roads to avoid the unintended consequence of preventing industrial development on rural lands**
4. **Support clarification to Government Code Section 65098.1.5 regarding land use authority in the grandfather clause**

Please contact Cal Cities Environmental Quality Legislative Advocate Melissa Sparks-Kranz at msparkskranz@calcities.org or 916-658-8232 or CSAC Housing, Land Use, and Transportation Legislative Advocate Mark Neuburger at mneuburger@counties.org or 916-591-2764 for follow up questions.



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

COURTS BEYOND CAPACITY: JUSTICE IN THE HIGH DESERT

San Bernardino Superior Court (SBSC) serves the largest geographic county in the contiguous U.S., with over 2.19 million residents. The **High Desert**, the county's largest area, borders **Inyo, Los Angeles, Kern, and Riverside counties and the states of Nevada and Arizona**. The High Desert includes several unincorporated cities and five major cities—Adelanto, Apple Valley, Barstow, Hesperia, and Victorville—all with poverty rates surpassing the national average of 11% (Adelanto: 16%; Apple Valley: 17%; Barstow: 23%; Hesperia: 17.5%; Victorville: 19.9%). Limited or unavailable public transit, long travel distances, and inadequate courthouse facilities create significant barriers for over 416,000 residents.

High Desert courthouses face daily overcrowding, forcing tough operational decisions. Due to lack of in-custody cell space, inmates already transported on crowded buses are held in jury boxes prior to their hearing or turned away due to lack of holding space. In some instances, inmates may not be transported for hearings. Hallways are congested, raising safety concerns among visitors and jurors. While the court has made and will continue to make difficult adjustments to ensure cases are heard, the demand far exceeds available resources and facility space, underscoring the critical need for solutions to ensure access does not continue to be denied.

COMMUNITY GROWTH

416,000+

TOTAL RESIDENTS

THE HIGH DESERT ADDED NEARLY
48,000 NEW RESIDENTS BETWEEN
2010 AND 2023¹

2.5X

THE HIGH DESERT CITIES GREW
MORE THAN 2.5 TIMES FASTER
THAN THE STATE AS A WHOLE
FROM 2010 TO 2023¹



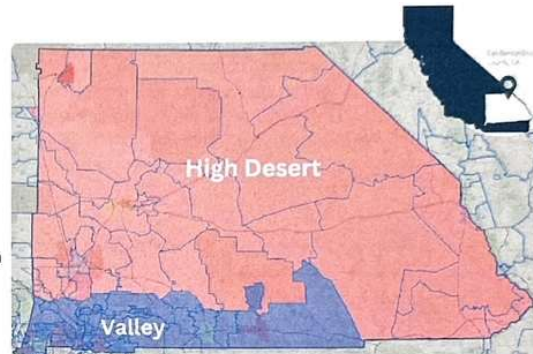
TAPESTRY PROJECT: HESPERIA ADDING OVER 16,000
RESIDENTIAL UNITS, PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATIONAL
AREAS, SCHOOLS, AND TOWN CENTERS



HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINK BETWEEN LAS VEGAS
AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



INCREASED JOB OPPORTUNITIES DUE TO
GROWING MANUFACTURING, LOGISTICS,
TRANSPORTATION & RETAIL INDUSTRIES



The High Desert region (in pink) borders Inyo, Los Angeles, Kern, and Riverside counties and the states of Nevada and Arizona. The Valley region of the county is represented in blue. **Population:** 416,718 and growing

LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT FACILITIES



0

**BARSTOW AND VICTORVILLE
COURTHOUSES HAVE ZERO
AVAILABLE COURTROOMS TO
HEAR CRIMINAL CASES**



426K

**BARSTOW AND VICTORVILLE
COURTHOUSES SEE 426,000
COURT USERS AND VISITORS
EACH YEAR**

IMPACT OF A NEW JUSTICE CENTER



ACCESS TO BASIC COURT SERVICES THAT
DON'T GET PROVIDED TO THE HIGH DESERT
COMMUNITY



ELIMINATES NEED TO TRAVEL TO DISTANT
COURTHOUSES IN OTHER REGIONS OF
THE COUNTY



CREATES SPACE FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF
AND EXPANDED PUBLIC SERVICES



ADDS CRITICALLY NEEDED NEW
COURTROOMS FOR MORE JUDGES TO
SERVE THE REGION



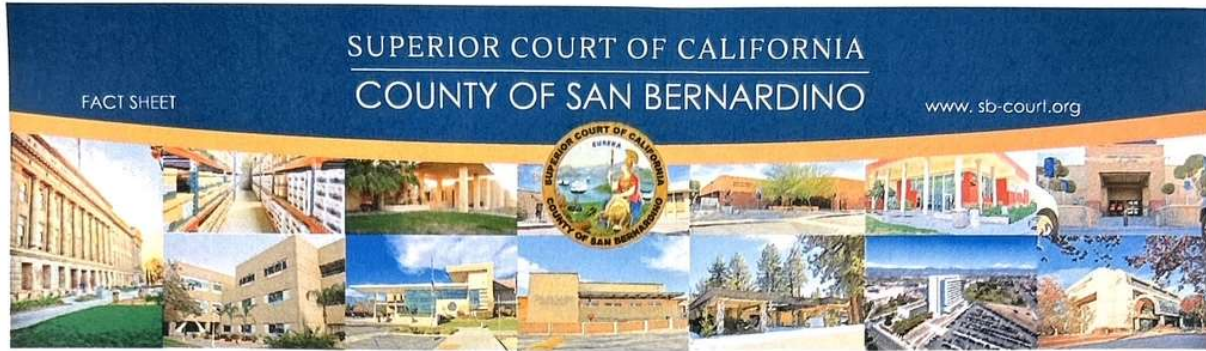
PROVIDE FOR THE SECURE TRANSPORT OF
IN-CUSTODY DEFENDANTS



ACCESS DENIED DUE TO INADEQUATE FACILITY SPACE: SEVERE SPACE LIMITATIONS PREVENT US
FROM PROVIDING ESSENTIAL COURT SERVICES LEAVING MANY IN HIGH DESERT COMMUNITIES
WITHOUT ACCESS TO JUSTICE

¹ United States Census Bureau, QuickFacts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

² San Bernardino County, New infrastructure ushers in a new retail era for San Bernardino County <https://main.sbcounty.gov/2024/06/06/new-infrastructure-ushers-in-a-new-retail-era-for-san-bernardino-county/>



COURT ADMINISTRATION

Hon. Lisa M. Rogan
PRESIDING JUDGE

Anabel Z. Romero
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THE NUMBERS

20,105
SQUARE MILES

2.2M
RESIDENTS



20%
PROJECTED POPULATION
GROWTH IN THE INLAND
EMPIRE BETWEEN
2020 & 2050

12
COURTHOUSE
LOCATIONS

FUNDING

FY 2013-14 to FY2025-26



WORKFORCE

1,229
TOTAL

124
JOB CLASSIFICATIONS

JUDGES
COMMISSIONERS
COURT STAFF

85
18
1,126

JUDICIAL NEED

-27
SHORT 27 OR MORE JUDGES SINCE 2008
RESULTING IN HIGH WORKLOAD AND LONGER
TIME TO CASE RESOLUTION

2,864
OUR JUDICIAL OFFICERS HANDLE AN AVERAGE OF
2,864 FILINGS ANNUALLY - A CASELOAD 18%
HIGHER THAN THE STATE AVERAGE

JUDGESHIP VACANCY HISTORY

The San Bernardino Superior Court has consistently been the **most underjudged court in the State**, with an unmet judicial need ranging from 57 in 2014 to 30 in 2022 and now 27 in 2025.



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