



**Town of Atherton
Office of the Mayor
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Phone: (650) 752-0500**

April 11, 2023

Senator Josh Becker
1020 O Street, Room 7250
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for SB 537 (Becker) Multijurisdictional Body Teleconferencing

Dear Senator Becker:

On behalf of the Town of Atherton, *I write in strong support of SB 537 (Becker), also known as the Accessibility in Multijurisdictional Body Teleconferencing Act.* This important bill will allow multijurisdictional boards to choose to convene remotely without limits on remote meetings and disclosure of location, therefore making it easier for all to participate.

For multijurisdictional bodies covering large areas, it can often be difficult for board members and the public to travel great lengths to actively participate in a meeting. This distance disincentivizes participation from community members, as well as prospective legislative body members.

With AB 361 (Rivas, 2021), which expired in February 2023, local multijurisdictional boards had begun to feel the impact of transitioning back to in person meetings. Boards experienced issues with membership retention and are concerned about a drop in public attendance. Many multijurisdictional legislative bodies also lack the flexibility to accommodate their members and the public with hybrid teleconferencing meetings.

SB 537 also updates health exemptions to include an exemption for individuals in immunocompromised situations so that those individuals can meet remotely without risking their health or the health of a loved one.

Additionally, there is a lack of recorded data on public attendance of teleconferenced and remote meetings of legislative bodies in California. This bill also collects data on attendance of remote meetings and requires the data to be posted on agencies' websites, increasing available data and evidence on the benefit of remote meetings.

SB 537 provides gateways for all to attend and actively participate in multijurisdictional agency meetings. For these reasons, the Town supports SB 537 and urges the legislature to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,

Bill Widmer
Mayor
Town of Atherton

Cc: Marc Hershman, Peninsula Clean Energy