RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2020-493

MEETING: August 11, 2020
TO: The Board of Supervisors
FROM: Dallin Kimble, County Administrative Officer
RE: Ratify Letter Opposing AB 660

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Ratify a Letter Opposing Assembly Bill 660, Which Would Prohibit Law Enforcement from Engaging in Contact Tracing.

Assembly Bill 660 would prohibit law enforcement from engaging in contact tracing. Law enforcement officers who are already on staff, familiar with emergency operations and trained in protocols for contact tracing are a key reason that we have been able to contain the pandemic as long as we have.

While the same capacity may not be needed in every jurisdiction, this letter argues that this decision to use law enforcement officers or not should remain with each county. Local decision making is a key pillar of the legislative platform; therefore, this letter has been sent and is requested now to be ratified by the Board.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
The Board has ratified letters supporting or opposing legislation.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Do not ratify the letter, and direct staff to draft a letter withdrawing the letter of opposition.

ATTACHMENTS:
AB 660 Opposition Letter (PDF)

RESULT: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Marshall Long, District III Supervisor
SECONDER: Rosemarie Smallcombe, District I Supervisor
AYES: Rosemarie Smallcombe, Marshall Long, Kevin Cann, Miles Menetrey
EXCUSED: Merlin Jones
August 4, 2020

The Honorable Marc Levine
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5135
Sacramento, CA  94249

RE:  Opposition to Assembly Bill 660

Dear Assembly Member Levine:

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors writes to express deep opposition to AB 660, which would prohibit law enforcement from engaging in contact tracing. The use of law enforcement officers in contact tracing is an essential, life-saving capacity for communities like ours now and in any future pandemic events. While the same capacity may not be needed in every jurisdiction, the decision to use law enforcement officers or not should remain with each county.

Rural counties are particularly stretched for resources. Despite operating a small clinic, many of our residents have to drive forty minutes or more to get medical care in Fresno, Merced or Modesto. Our local health department operates as a division of a consolidated Health and Human Services Agency to allow staff to complete duties related to public health, behavioral health, and other wellness divisions.

Given our limited staff and resources, the use of law enforcement in contact tracing has been the only way to keep our county in containment for as long as we have. If contact tracing is not done rapidly while in the containment phase, pandemic is more likely to grow rapidly and become uncontrollable. Law enforcement officers who are already on staff, familiar with emergency operations and trained in protocols for contact tracing are a key reason that we have been able to contain the pandemic as long as we have.
We understand that the use of law enforcement in contact tracing may not be ideal for other communities, but it has been and will continue to be an essential resource for Mariposa County that has prevented illness and saved lives. We feel strongly that the decision to use law enforcement or not should remain with cities and counties. Accordingly, we are compelled to fervently oppose AB 660, as written, and encourage you to withdraw this bill that threatens the safety of communities like ours.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Kevin Cann, Chair

CC: Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson
    Senator Andreas Borgeas
    Assembly Member Frank Bigelow