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May 23, 2011

The Honorable Mark Leno, Chair
The Honorable Bob Huff, Vice-chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Chair
The Honorable Jim Nielsen, Vice-chair
Assembly Budget Committee

Honorable Members:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I write to express our support for the Governor's budget framework, as outlined in the May Revision. In particular, counties support the realignment construct with funding secured through an extension of the 2009 increases in the Vehicle License Fee (VLF) rates and sales tax rates and the constitutional protections currently outlined in SCA 1X and ACA 2X.

The concept of realignment – the transfer of responsibilities to counties with an ongoing funding source – is especially timely given today's decision by the United States Supreme Court directing the state to reduce its prison population. We urge the Legislature to act swiftly on the realignment proposal, including the constitutional amendment, to ensure that counties have the resources we need to provide appropriate services, supervision, and sanctions to offenders returning to our communities. A properly funded and protected realignment of services is the only logical and responsible way to comply with the Court's order and continue to provide for public safety.

To that end, counties urge a special election to ratify the constitutional protections and revenues at the earliest possible time. Delay would only serve to underscore uncertainties at the local level, with local decision makers faced with preparing for local programming without the assurance of continued funding or protections that mitigate local risk. Dedicated funding and constitutional protections are fundamental to counties' support of realignment, as they provide the foundational support for the transfer of responsibilities from the state.

Counties remain committed to working with the Administration and the Legislature on a realignment plan that allows for a more efficient and effective

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delivery of services to our mutual constituencies. While we recognize the difficult decisions facing the Legislature in the current fiscal and political environment, it is imperative to ensure that an appropriate realignment structure is developed with a carefully designed transfer of responsibilities and authority – accompanied by sufficient funding – if counties are to be successful in managing public safety services locally.

We remain eager to continue our dialogue with you on these and other important budget matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Tavaglione". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "T".

John Tavaglione
President, California State Association of Counties
Riverside County Supervisor

cc: The Honorable Darrell Steinberg, Senate President pro Tempore
The Honorable Bob Dutton, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable John Pérez, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Connie Conway, Assembly Republican Leader