



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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May 10, 2022

The Honorable Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer Sr.
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Assembly Bill 1608 (Gipson) – County officers: consolidation of offices.
As amended April 7, 2022 – OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer,

On behalf of the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, I respectfully write in opposition of Assembly Bill 1608 by Assembly Member Mike Gipson; which would create unavoidable, significant costs to our county, while removing the existing authority of elected county boards of supervisors.

AB 1608 strikes the authority of all county boards of supervisors to combine the duties of the county office of the Sheriff and coroner by way of ordinance. Currently, San Benito County is one of the 48 counties in our state consolidate the duties of the county-elected Sheriff and the coroner into a single office. Although AB 1608 does not require counties to create an independent Office of the Medical Examiner, our county may be forced to do so given the high volume of cases they receive.

As currently drafted, a county is also permitted to consolidate the functions and duties of the coroner with other county offices, such as the public administrator. Nevertheless, not only is it unclear how the administrative, medical, and investigative functions of the coroner could be consolidated with other offices, more notably it would require widespread changes with regards to staffing, resources, security, and physical space.

Ultimately, we understand the intent of this legislation and are deeply sensitive to concerns from the community. However, while prohibiting the consolidation of the Sheriff and coroner would be a substantial undertaking, impacting our budget and stripping our county board of supervisors of their fundamental duty to make sound fiscal decisions on behalf of our constituents. Lastly, under current law supervisors can exercise their existing authority to combine the duties of the coroner with other county offices if that is the will of the voters.

For these reasons and many more, San Benito County opposes AB 1608 and respectfully requests your NO vote. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our requests, we ask that you reach

out to our County Advocate, Michelle Rubalcava from Nielsen Merksamer Parrinnello Gross & Leoni, LLP at mrubalcava@nmgovlaw.com or (916) 446-6752.

Respectfully,

Bea Gonzales
Chair of the Board of Supervisors
Board of Supervisor, 5th District
San Benito County

CC: The Honorable Mike Gipson
Members, Assembly Public Safety Committee