



# COUNTY OF SISKIYOU

## Board of Supervisors

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January 7, 2020

Ms. Fiona Ma, California State Treasurer  
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 110  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **Subject: California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) Funding**

Dear Ms. Ma:

We are writing this letter to express our appreciation for your advocacy regarding rural county issues, and to ask for your attention on an issue that impacts rural and agricultural communities specifically. The California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) was enacted on July 14, 1965 to implement a variety of state farmland preservation policies directed at discouraging the unnecessary and premature conversion of farmland to other uses. The Williamson Act helps to ensure that specific parcels of land remain in agricultural production or other related open space use. In return, landowners receive a substantially reduced property tax assessment based upon the agricultural income potential as opposed to full market value.

California's agriculture sector is the largest in the United States and generates over \$45 billion in commodities annually, which further results in approximately \$75 billion in related economic activities. In addition, agricultural production ensures that vast areas of California's lands remain un-developed and in open space, which, in addition to many other benefits, provides recreational and environmental advantages. In 2018, the gross agriculture receipts in Siskiyou County were \$361.5 million. Of the approximately 4.04 million acres in the County, 1.5 million acres consist of farming and ranching and 2.5 million are woodland and forested acres (timber and public lands grazing are accounted for in agricultural receipts). Agricultural production is vital to Siskiyou County's health and economy, and keeping land in agricultural production is critical when considering the history, tradition and future of our rural landscape and economic base.

Since its inception, Siskiyou County has embraced and participated in the Williamson Act, and has carried out the policies outlined in the Act. Approximately 420,000 acres throughout the County are enrolled in the Williamson Act and are conserved for agricultural use. However, in 2009, Governor Schwarzenegger eliminated all but \$1,000 in state funding for the Williamson Act program, including subvention payments. This caused a financial shift of the Williamson Act to the County at a very difficult financial time, as other state budget decisions and the recession forced the County to reduce or eliminate vital programs and services. Since 2009, the County has continued the Williamson Act for

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Brandon Criss  
*District 1*

Ed Valenzuela  
*District 2*

Michael N. Kobseff  
*District 3*

Lisa Nixon  
*District 4*

Ray Haupt  
*District 5*

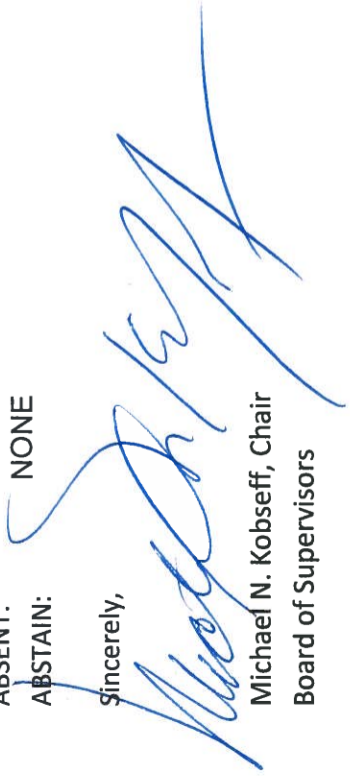
existing contracts, while at the same time continuing to struggle in balancing the County's budget, meet mandated services and activities, and perform other necessary public service duties.

As part of Governor Newsom's financial goals and in an effort to continue to support agriculture and rural counties, we are asking that he restore funding under the Williamson Act at a level sufficient for subvention of existing contracts and to cover future eligible contracts, as appropriate. Inclusion of Williamson Act funding in the state budget will also provide relief of financial burden to rural counties, allow us to meet our mandated duties, and assist us in meeting the various goals that the Governor has outlined for counties throughout the State.

We again express our deep appreciation for your attention to rural county issues, and for your consideration regarding Williamson Act funding. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Elizabeth Nielsen, Project Coordinator, at [enielsen@co.siskiyou.ca.us](mailto:enielsen@co.siskiyou.ca.us) or (530) 842-8012. This letter was approved by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors on January 7, 2020, by the following vote:

AYES:	Supervisors Criss, Haupt, Valenzuela, Nixon and Kobseff
NOES:	NONE
ABSENT:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE

Sincerely,



Michael N. Kobseff, Chair  
Board of Supervisors

cc: Senator Brian Dahle  
Assemblywoman Megan Dahle  
Rural County Representatives of California  
California State Association of Counties