July 12, 2022

Honorable Steve Bradford, Chair Senate

Public Safety Committee 1020 N Street,

Room 545

Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Anna Caballero, Chair

Senate Governance and Finance Committee

State Capitol, Room 407

Sacramento, CA 9581

**Subject: AB 1608 County officers: consolidation of offices – OPPOSE**

Dear Assemblymember/Chair Bradford and Assemblymember/Chair Caballero:

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors writes to express our opposition to AB 1608, which seeks to remove county authority to combine the duties of the Sheriff with the duties of the Coroner.

As it now stands, a county Board of Supervisors has the ability to consolidate the offices of Sheriff and Coroner into a single elected office, which is administratively efficient. AB 1608 strikes the authority of county boards of supervisors to combine the duties of the county office of the Sheriff and Coroner by way of ordinance. The proposed change would create significant costs for Siskiyou County while removing the existing authority of this elected body.

As currently drafted, AB 1608, is problematic because the language of the bill lacks clarity on what is expected of counties. Specific concerns include the requirements for becoming a Coroner and whether these requirements will need to be rewritten with the enactment of AB 1608. The lack of clarity in the language of the bill also does not delineate if the separation will make the duties of the Coroner a function of the city or the county. As currently drafted, a county is 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, but more notably it would require widespread changes with regard to staffing, resources, security, and physical space. Siskiyou County holds reservations on the validity of the overall argument to separate the duties and functions between the Sheriff and the Coroner, and if doing so does more harm than good.

Furthermore, the offices that AB 1608 seeks to change are already servicing the needs of the community and the county as they are established. Instead of adding confusion, by limiting a county’s Board of Supervisors’ ability to consolidate the offices of Sheriff and Coroner, the decision should be left to the Board of Supervisors. This is because a county’s elected Board of Supervisors is the most appropriate body to evaluate the impacts of the operation regarding the offices of Sheriff and Coroner.

In the event that the Sheriff and Coroner’s offices were separated, there would be quantifiable impacts and costs to the County. A separately established Coroner’s office would require that they hire their own staff, including fiscal and coroner staff; currently, deputy sheriffs all have coroner abilities and responsibilities. Coroners would also need to be provided their own location, computers, IT support, internet, janitorial

services, cell phones, computer and software licensing, supplies, contracts for autopsy and indigent burial, dispatching services, etc. These costs would be a significant hurdle for rural counties such as Siskiyou, adding approximately $1.4 million in new annual expenditures. In addition, the Sheriff’s Department would be required to partner with the Coroner each time there is a situation involving a dead body and would be required to wait for the Coroner to arrive, requiring that deputies stay on the scene longer which consequently leaves fewer deputies on active patrol.

For the reasons above, Siskiyou County must respectfully oppose AB 1608.

This letter was approved by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors on July 12, 2022, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Sincerely,

Brandon A. Criss, Chair

Board of Supervisors