CALAVERAS COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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August 29, 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom
Governor's Office
1021 O Street
Sacramento CA. 95814
leg.unit@gov.ca.gov

Re: **Senate Bill 926 (Dodd): Request for signature**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the Calaveras County Resource Conservation District, I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 926.

In recent years, California wildfires have dramatically increased in size and intensity throughout the state. Prescribed fire—the intentional, beneficial use of fire—is widely recognized as one of the most ecologically appropriate and cost-effective tools available. However, despite widespread acknowledgement of this practice across the scientific and management communities and the larger public, prescribed fire faces a number of barriers and continues to be underutilized.

Currently, according to the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, insurance is no longer available for most private landowners, contractors, non-governmental organizations, cultural practitioners, and others seeking to conduct prescribed fire and cultural burning projects on California's private lands. Meanwhile, the state of California is certifying burn bosses to plan and implement projects (per SB1260, Jackson 2018), and the state is investing unprecedented amounts of funding into prescribed fire projects and partnerships. Insurance coverage is the lynchpin that will enable these efforts and allow them to grow—without insurance options, much of this work will not be possible.

The Budget Act of 2021 appropriated $20 million to establish a Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program, in consultation with the Department of Insurance and the California Natural Resources Agency. This prescribed fire claims fund is intended to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires by nonpublic entities, such as Native American tribes, private landowners, and other nongovernmental entities. At this time, the funding has been set aside, but the claims fund has not been established. SB 926 builds upon the initial budget language to finally establish and operationalize the fund.

For the reasons stated, (ORGANIZATION or INDIVIDUAL) is pleased to support SB 926. We urge you to sign this important bill and put the Claims Fund to work as soon as possible. Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Gordon Long
Executive Director