



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

2026
LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



Adopted By:

Madeline Cline
District 1

Maureen Mulheren
District 2

John Haschak
District 3

Bernie Norvell
District 4

Ted Williams
District 5

Prepared By:

Chief Executive Officer
Darcie Antle



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

2026

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors' mission is to create and maintain a responsive and responsible government that enhances the quality of life of the people of Mendocino County. The County's mission is to deliver services that meet public safety, health, social, cultural, education, transportation, economic, and environmental needs of our communities. Mendocino County's Strategic Plan guides the critical decisions the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors faces to improve the quality of life for County residents.

MENDOCINO COUNTY'S STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

a. An Effective County Government

- i. Define clear roles, responsibilities, and processes for government leadership.
- ii. Create a thriving organizational culture.
- iii. Implement new approaches to demonstrate our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).
- iv. Improve operational efficiency by streamlining processes and implementing technology-based solutions.
- v. Increase transparency in government operations to build trust with employees, communities, and partners.
- vi. Assure financial sustainability of the County.

b. A Safe and Healthy County

- i. Provide a person-centered approach to help under-resourced individuals and families thrive.
- ii. Deliver culturally relevant public health services that focus on prevention and are guided by social determinants of health.
- iii. Increase access to behavioral health services.
- iv. Help people feel safe in their communities.
- v. Implement practices that support a sustainable environment and responsible stewardship of natural resources.

c. A Thriving Economy

- i. Support a vibrant economy.
- ii. Support increased housing stock at a range of affordability levels.
- iii. Ensure that affordable and reliable broadband communications is available to all County residents.

d. A Prepared and Resilient County

- i. Increase disaster/emergency preparedness and resiliency.
- ii. Ensure access to rural fire protection and emergency medical services.
- iii. Improve and maintain transportation and road systems/access routes.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS – SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT MAP

The Board of Supervisors is the legislative body of Mendocino County government. The Board adopts policies, establishes programs, appoints certain non-elected department heads, and adopts annual budgets for all County departments. The Board of Supervisors also serves as the governing board for two special districts; the Mendocino County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District. Supervisors also serve on regional agencies and as ex-officio members on the boards of county service districts. The Board of Supervisors is a five-member board elected by district on the basis of population, as required by state law. Supervisors are elected on a non-partisan basis and serve for a term of four years. Along with the Board's committee and agency appointments, Supervisors also elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson annually among themselves.



Madeline Cline
District 1



Mo Mulheren
District 2



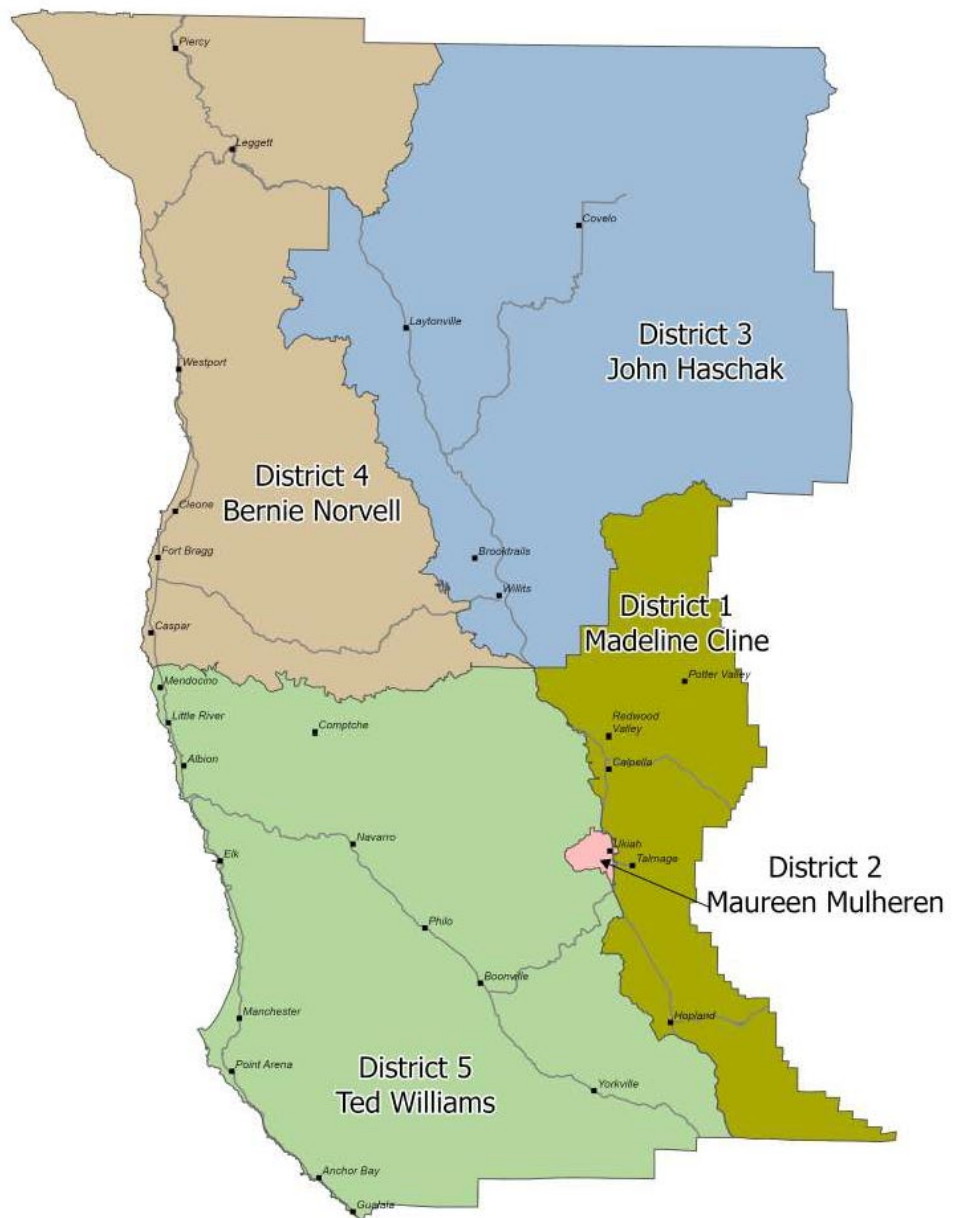
John Haschak
District 3



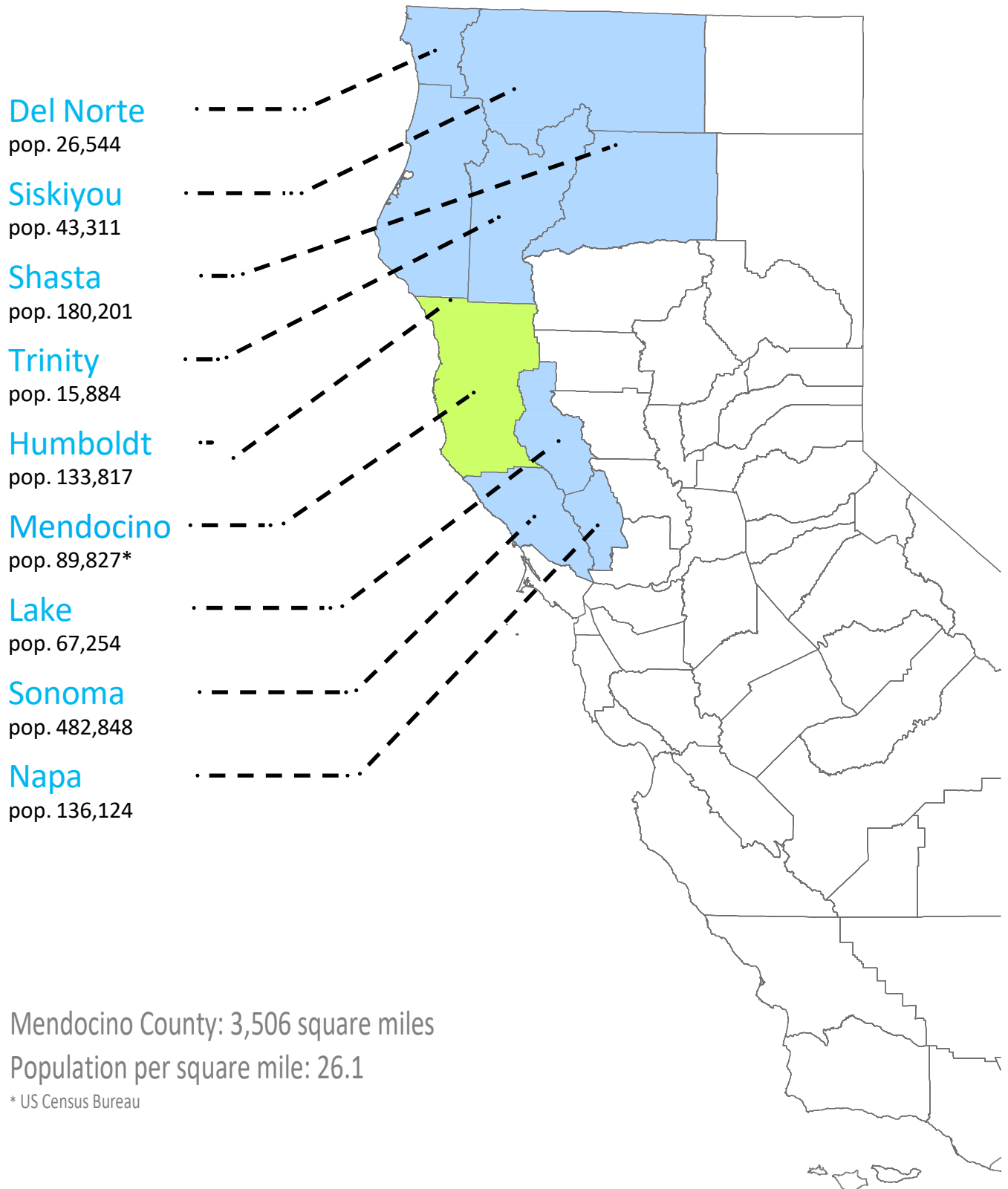
Bernie Norvell
District 4



Ted Williams
District 5

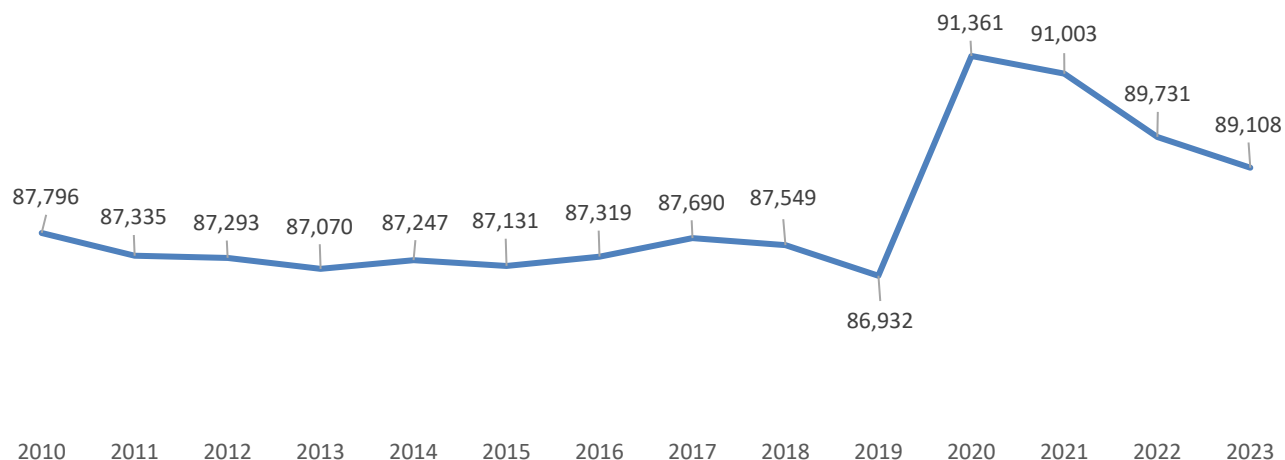


MENDOCINO COUNTY PROFILE



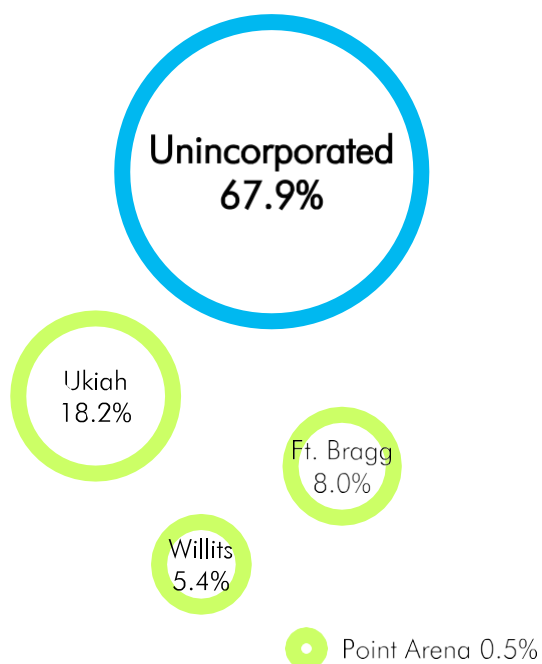
MENDOCINO COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Mendocino County Total Population



* US Census Bureau 2023

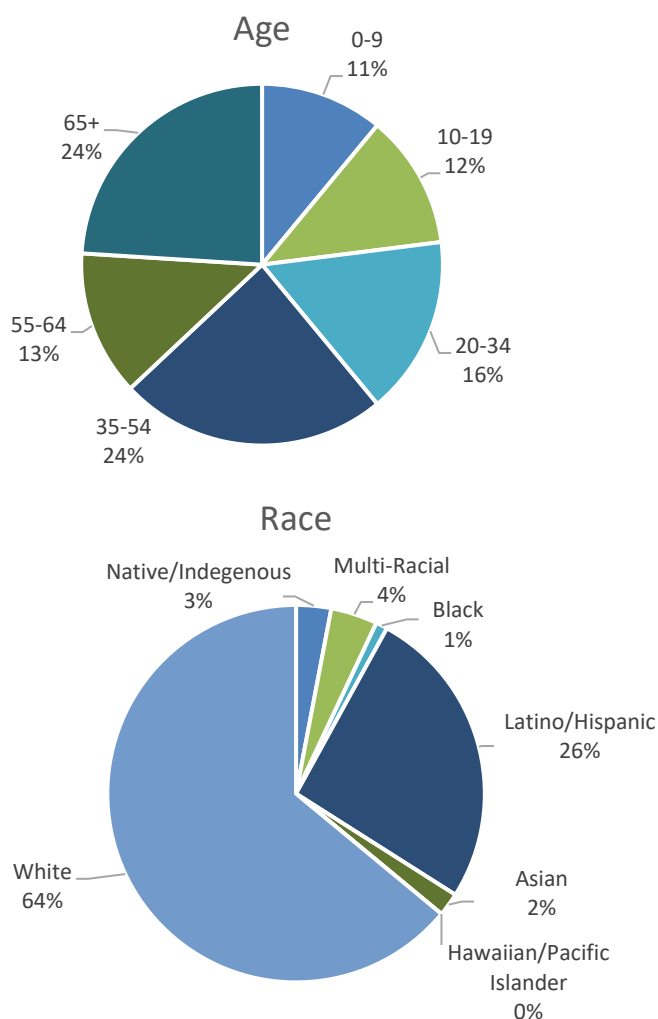
Population by Jurisdiction



Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

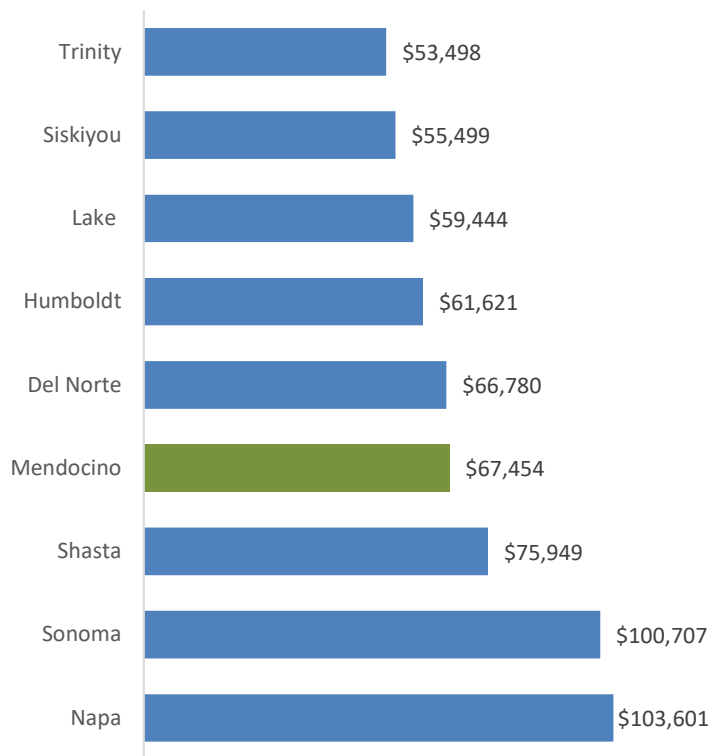
* Source: US Census Bureau 2023

Mendocino County Population



MENDOCINO COUNTY ECONOMIC TRENDS

Median Household Income



*Source: US Census Bureau 2023

Households with Income under \$50,000/yr: 36.3%

*Source: US Census Bureau 2023

Number of Households: 34,951

*Source: US Census Bureau 2023

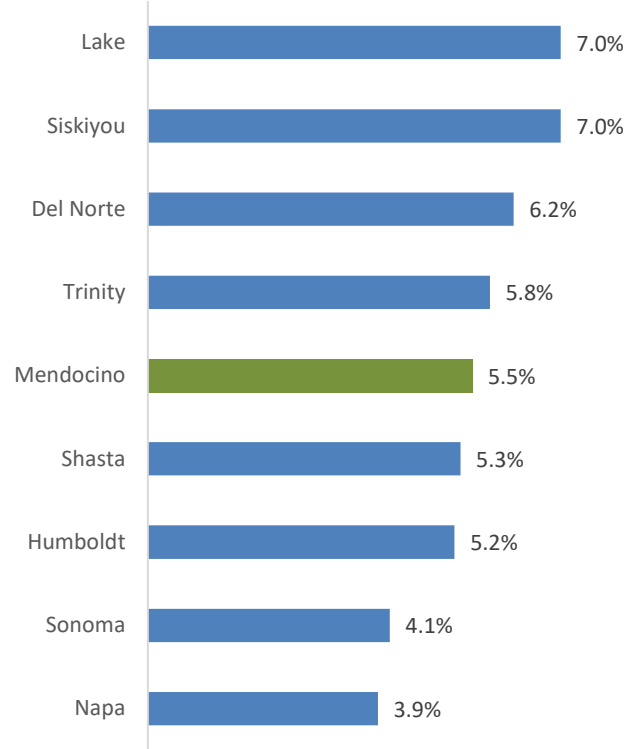
Civilian Labor Force: 37,510

*Source: CA EDD

Labor Force as Percent of Population: 42%
(vs. 62.4% CA)

*Source: CA EDD

Unemployment Rate



*Source: State of California Employment Development Division (EDD) 2024

Median Sold Price of Existing Single-Family Homes
(July 2025): \$567,000 * Source: California Association of Realtors

Spending 30% or More of Household Income on
Housing:

- Mortgaged Owners: 47.1% (vs. 38.4% CA)
- Renters: 56.2% (vs. 54.7% CA)

*Source: US Census Bureau 2023

People Living Below Poverty Level: 15.2% (vs. 12% CA)

- Families: 10.7% (vs. 8.4% CA)
- Children: 17.4% (vs. 15.1% CA)
- People 65+: 11.7% (vs. 11.3% CA)
- Veterans: 13.5% (vs. 7.8% CA)

*Source: US Census Bureau 2023



2026 STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM OVERVIEW

Local government is uniquely and best positioned to support, serve, and respond to community and individual needs. The ability of the Board to deliver on its mission, “to create and maintain a responsive and responsible government that enhances the quality of life of the people of Mendocino County,” requires support from all levels of government. Therefore, state and federal legislative and regulatory policy and action are often needed to support local government to achieve meaningful impact in their communities. State and federal actions play a critical role in enabling counties to deliver, shape, and fund services effectively, as well as in eliminating barriers to service provision.

This support has been significant in the County’s recovery from several major disasters and a global health pandemic. To uphold the County’s commitment to its residents, County staff continue to seek constructive state and federal action, including resource allocation. Each year, Mendocino County departments review and recommend state and federal legislation to improve and enhance County financing, operation, and efficiency in service delivery. The legislative platform includes the over-arching guiding principles listed below, prioritizes state and federal issues intended for specific legislative action, and lays out ongoing general state and federal issues that the County will monitor for potential action should opportunities arise. The Board of Supervisors adopts these legislative positions as a platform that guides County advocacy to elected state and federal representatives. This advocacy is carried out by County staff and professional lobbyists hired by the County, the National Association of Counties (NACO), Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC).

The numbering and order of items are for tracking only and do not denote rank or indicate priority. Key state and federal issues have been identified to guide staff and lobbyist efforts during the legislative session. However, action may be taken on any issue as opportunities arise. State priority issues may also present advocacy opportunities at the federal level, and vice versa.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through this platform, Mendocino County will rely on advocates, professional associations, such as the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), and the National Association of Counties (NACO), local elected officials, and staff to:

1. Support legislation that furthers the goals identified within the County’s Strategic Plan Priorities:
 - i. An Effective County Government
 - ii. A Safe and Healthy County
 - iii. A Thriving Economy
 - iv. A Prepared and Resilient County
2. Develop, pursue, and support legislative and budget efforts that protect and/or enhance local governments’ revenues, maximize the County’s access to state and federal funding sources, and/or increase local funding flexibility. Oppose any effort to balance the state budget by removing or recouping local government resources and support legislation that will allow the County to ensure full cost recovery for services provided to other governmental entities.

3. Advocate for the protection of County funding, especially in tax and fiscal legislation. Oppose any provisions, funding cuts, or reforms that threaten County revenues, infrastructure investment, or the delivery of essential services.
4. Encourage and seek legislation to facilitate orderly and sustainable economic development and increase the opportunity for discretionary revenues and programmatic and financial flexibility for the County.
5. Oppose unfunded and underfunded mandates and realignment initiatives that do not fully fund services mandates cost-shifted to the County, including cost-of-living increases and cost increases due to population and caseload growth.
6. Support legislation that preserves local control; oppose legislation that diminishes local control of services and revenues.
7. Support the County's authority to ensure mutually acceptable tax-sharing agreements for annexation and incorporation that protect or enhance the County's ability to provide services to its residents.
8. Support legislation that provides tax, bond, and other funding formulas for the equitable distribution of state and federal monies while opposing attempts to decrease, restrict, or eliminate County revenue sources.

Pursuant to Mendocino County Policy No. 19, the Board of Supervisors adopts an annual legislative platform reflecting the County's priorities for legislative advocacy, state and federal funding, and issues of interest to local government and communities. The purpose of this Legislative Platform is to clearly outline the positions of the County on priority issues and matters that impact the County's ability to operate effectively while allowing the consideration of legislative and budget issues that arise during the legislative session. In keeping with past practice, the Board referred the development of the 2026 Legislative Platform to the General Government Standing Committee, comprised of Chair Maureen Mulheren and Supervisor Bernie Norvell, to work with County Department Heads and Executive Office staff in developing a framework of issues for Board consideration.

On November 18, 2025, the Board adopted the 2026 Legislative Platform reflecting the County's legislative priorities and policies for the upcoming legislative cycle. In adopting an annual legislative advocacy platform, the Board of Supervisors strives to enhance the quality of life in Mendocino County through effective state and federal legislation.

STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & FOCUS AREAS

In adopting this year's legislative platform, the following serve as Mendocino County's priorities and focus areas for federal and state legislative advocacy.

GOVERNMENTAL TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC ACCESS

ISSUE: Article I, Section Three of the California Constitution guarantees that “the people have the right to instruct their representatives, petition government for redress of grievances, and assemble freely to consult for the common good.” This includes a right to access information concerning the meetings and writings of public officials. To ensure that the right to openly scrutinize public agencies is maintained, the Constitution requires local agencies to comply with certain state laws that outline the basic requirements for public access to meetings and public records.

The Ralph M. Brown Act provides guidelines for how local agencies must hold public meetings. Among other provisions, the Act requires that meetings of the legislative body of a local agency be open and public. The Brown Act was enacted in 1953 first allowed teleconference meetings in 1988. At the time, San Diego County was considering the use of video teleconferencing for meetings and hearings of the board of supervisors due to concerns about the long distances that some of their constituents travelled to participate and were concerned that these distances prohibited some people from attending at all.

In response to the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic, including mandatory “stay-at-home” orders, public agencies had to adjust to new ways of conducting business because of the public safety risk associated with meeting in person. In March 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order N-29-20, which provided local agencies with more flexibility to use teleconferencing without making those teleconference locations accessible to the public. On June 11, the Governor issued Executive Order N08-21 notifying local agencies and the public that previous executive orders concerning the conduct of public meetings would apply through September 30, 2021. The Legislature later enacted AB 361 (Robert Rivas, 2021) which allows, until January 1, 2024, local agencies to use teleconferencing without complying with specified Brown Act restrictions in certain state-declared emergencies. In 2022, AB 2449 was passed, allowing the legislative body of a local agency to use teleconferencing without complying with the traditional Brown Act teleconferencing rules or the modified AB 361 rules in certain circumstances. In 2025, SB 707 made updates to California's Brown Act, which require local government meetings to provide real-time remote access, translated materials, and improved accessibility, including ADA compliance. It clarifies rules for remote participation and public comment and establishes social media engagement by officials as a permanent practice, aiming to increase transparency and public involvement. Additional flexibility is needed to maximize public participation, further reduce vehicle miles traveled, and to adjust to uncertain events.

Counties and other local governments have also faced a significant increase in the number and size of Public Records Act (PRA) requests over the past few years. The intensive work required to review records and redact the material that is exempt or prohibited from disclosure has grown exponentially. Further compounding this problem is that counties must make tough judgment calls on whether to release some records, especially when doing so is specifically prohibited, for example because doing so would violate privacy laws or employee confidentiality. Counties have also seen an increase in vexatious litigants using the PRA to grind government work to a halt.

The County of Mendocino supports transparency in governmental and public access. However, legislative proposals are needed to address the impact of these growing issues on local governments' capacity to provide this service without impact on other critical services.

STATE ACTION

- Support legislation that balances increased public trust, confidence and access to public meetings and records while realizing the fiscal and operational constraints of local government.
- Advocate for the appropriate utilization of video technologies to increase public participation and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

COUNTY ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE

ISSUE: The revenue received from the fuel tax is deposited in the State Highway Users Tax Account (HUTA). This revenue is allocated to the state, counties, and cities, with the majority (56 percent) designated for state highway maintenance. However, more than 80 percent of all road miles in the state are owned and operated by cities and counties. As a result, gas tax revenue is woefully inadequate to cover the state's local road infrastructure needs, including 54 out of 58 counties where Pavement Condition Indexes are considered to be at risk or poor. Mendocino County is one of these counties.

Senate Bill 1 (Beall and Frazier) was a landmark transportation funding package signed by Governor Brown on April 28, 2017. It offered counties a significant influx of new revenue to invest in the local street and road system. Maintenance of County streets and roads is vital to the County's safety and economic wellbeing. Given attempts in 2018 to repeal this law, it is critical that the County stay vigilant to protect investments in roads and infrastructure and inform state partners of impacts on counties that could limit access to SB 1 funds. It is important that state road and infrastructure investments are protected to continue progress toward a full recovery and to prepare for future disasters.

STATE ACTION

- Advocate for increased funding levels for transportation infrastructure, operations and maintenance as accessible transportation plays a vital role in economic and community wellbeing.
- Support maintaining existing funding levels with historical shares of current funding sources ensured for counties.
- Advocate for new transportation funding for existing maintenance of low Pavement Condition Index (PCI) local roads to bring them up to an adequate and safe level.
- Support efforts to ensure all users of the County's transportation system adequately invest in the transportation infrastructure critical to everyday life. Transportation systems must be regularly maintained to preserve the existing public infrastructure as current revenues are not keeping pace with needs of the local road or transit systems.
- Advocate for increased and stabilized state revenues to the County.
- Support work with federal, state, local, tribal, community and other partners to identify, assess, modify, repair, or construct essential transportation infrastructure for critical County emergency response and evacuation missions.
- Support a set-aside in the Cap-and-Invest funding for preventative maintenance of road systems for all local governments.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Advocate for preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds, a vital tool used by local governments to finance infrastructure and capital improvements.
- Advocate for increased and stabilized federal revenue and reimbursement to the County related to FEMA activities, and the need to restore or replace public infrastructure within disaster and fire-scarred areas.

- Support reforms that would simplify and expedite disaster recovery processes and projects, improve accessibility to assistance for counties and residents, and enhance transparency and flexibility in program administration.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE & RENEWABLE ENERGY

ISSUE: With over 3,500 square miles of diverse terrain and 129 miles of coastline, Mendocino County is home to significant ecosystems, critical biodiversity and a rural population. Population density is about 26.1 per square mile (2020 Census). As an at-risk region, Mendocino County requires a coordinated approach and significant resources, bolstered by state and federal support, to advance county-wide initiatives and strengthen community resilience to extreme weather events and climate-related hazards. Per FEMA’s National Risk Index, Mendocino County is in the 95.1 national percentile, has a “very high” social vulnerability, and the highest hazard type risk ratings are wildfire (97.3), drought (99.4), earthquake (98.4), landslide (99.5), and riverine flooding (96.0). In recent years, climate related hazards continue to be experienced throughout the County—from the 2017 firestorm through the severe winter storms of 2023.

Hazards generally faced in Mendocino County include but are not limited to wildfire, drought, extreme heat events, severe winter storms and associated flooding, poor air quality due to wildfires, agriculture and forestry pests and diseases, dune and bluff erosion, landslides and debris flows, wide-scale tree mortality, and sea-level rise. Many hazard types are experienced countywide while other categories occur in distinct climate areas dependent on their geography.

California’s 4th Climate Assessment projects the annual impacts of climate related hazards and extreme weather events exceeding \$113 billion statewide. Current financial resources are insufficient to fund needed initiatives. These efforts include building resilience to environmental and economic shocks, promoting energy efficiency and independence to reduce utility costs and reliance on external sources, encouraging technology innovation to stimulate local solutions, and advancing emissions reduction and adaptation strategies to address climate-related risks. Securing additional resources is essential for supporting these initiatives and bridging the existing funding gaps.

STATE & FEDERAL ACTION

- Support investment in and efforts to support the infrastructure needed in rural areas and tribal regions to support resiliency, mitigation and adaptation planning and decision-making.
- Advocate for projects that improve community resilience and improve electric grid reliability through renewable energy resources.
- Advocate for funding to support energy conservation and efficiency for local government facilities, with a focus on rural counties.
- Support infrastructure investments that drive innovation in energy technology, promote energy independence and efficiency, and accelerate emissions reductions through renewable energy and zero emission vehicles.
- Support legislation and budgetary actions for innovative technologies and infrastructure, helping communities build resilience and adapt to emerging challenges through tax credits.
- Support legislation that incentivizes and advances innovative energy solutions aimed at reducing emissions and generating economic benefits for Mendocino County.
- Support legislation that encourages research and analysis of innovative energy technology projects; streamlines the environmental review processes; increases investment in critical infrastructure, and the regional electric grid; allows stakeholder involvement; and supports emissions reductions.

- Advocate for expanding the development and use of local energy sources.
- Support forest and agricultural programs that promote and enhance carbon capture.
- Support localized water storage systems and solutions, including rainwater catchment.
- Support the implementation of sea level rise adaptation plans.
- Support utilizing biomass from healthy forest management projects to capture and store carbon and create biofuels.
- Advocate for funding to counties, Tribal Nations and cities along the coast to develop and implement adaptation plans and projects.
- Advocate for funding where adaptation requires retreat or moving away from properties.

DISASTER PREVENTION, RECOVERY, RESILIENCY & MITIGATION

ISSUE: During the 2017 Redwood Complex Fire, Mendocino County suffered tremendous loss, 36,000 acres were burnt, homes were lost, agricultural land was damaged, and watersheds were affected. However, this does not touch on the loss of lives. Mendocino communities continue to be hit hard by unprecedented disasters, including significant fires in 2018, 2020 and 2021 along with public safety power shut offs in 2019, drought, COVID-19 public health emergency, and severe winter storms in 2022 and 2023. The devastation of these events will live on for decades. The support of the state and federal government in both appropriations and policy changes are vital as the County continues to rebuild resilient communities and prepare for the “new normal” of increasingly catastrophic natural disasters.

STATE ACTION

- Support legislation, regulations, and executive actions that streamline disaster recovery, improve emergency preparedness, and promote community resiliency.
- Advocate for full and timely reimbursement for local government, individual, and small business losses following disasters.
- Support increased, flexible funding for local disaster preparedness, hazard mitigation, and recovery programs.
- Streamline state regulatory requirements for housing, infrastructure, and mitigation projects, especially post-disaster, by expanding exemptions, fast-tracking permits, and reducing red tape.
- Support insurance reforms to ensure homeowners and businesses in high-risk areas have access to affordable and adequate coverage.
- Advance efforts to strengthen California’s property insurance market, including policies that:
 - Expand consumer options.
 - Tie mitigation actions to premium reductions.
 - Ensure transparency in rate-setting.
 - Incentivize risk-reduction through home hardening and defensible space maintenance.
- Support legislation offering financial incentives such as tax credits, grants, or rebates for home hardening and fire mitigation efforts in rural and high-risk communities.
- Advocate for legislation that funds community education campaigns to increase awareness of wildfire risk, evacuation readiness, and mitigation strategies.
- Advocate for legislation that provides dedicated funding for wildfire prevention infrastructure, including secondary access routes, emergency egress improvements, and local evacuation route planning.
- Support assessment and removal of hazardous, dead, or dying trees, and the management of overgrown vegetation on public and private lands.
- Advocate for continued CEQA and Timber Harvest Plan exemptions for fuel reduction and forest health activities conducted by small landowners.
- Support ongoing funding for county-level baseline emergency management capabilities, including equipment, training, staffing, and planning.

- Advocate for enhanced alert and warning systems at the local level, particularly those that serve rural and hard-to-reach populations.
- Advocate for expanded state-funded rapid response assistance programs to support vulnerable communities in the immediate aftermath of a disaster without waiting for federal declarations.
- Advocate for increased state support for equitable emergency preparedness and recovery programs that prioritize seniors, children, non-English speakers, people with disabilities, and communities with access and functional needs.
- Support increased flexible state funding through both grants and direct allocations to support local emergency management capacity, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and eliminate burdensome match requirements and overly restrictive eligibility criteria.
- Support legislative and administrative tools for local governments to address hazard abatement issues on neglected, abandoned, or non-responsive parcels.
- Support policy changes that balance individual property rights with community fire safety, especially related to defensible space, vegetation management, and firebreak construction.
- Support the further development, deployment, and integration of early warning wildfire detection technologies, including AI-powered camera systems such as AlertCA, to enhance real-time monitoring, rapid response, and community resilience.
- Advocate for funding to expand statewide wildfire camera networks, ensuring coverage in rural, high-risk, and underserved areas, improving early detection and evacuation capabilities.
- Promote collaboration between state agencies, local governments, and technology providers to leverage advanced monitoring tools for improved situational awareness during wildfire events.
- Support the creation of a state-funded, standardized software platform for Emergency Operations Center (EOC) management to streamline communications, data sharing, and situational awareness across all Operational Areas and jurisdictions.
- Advocate for the development of a statewide, uniform system for evacuation mapping and emergency response coordination that ensures consistency, accuracy, and interoperability among local agencies.
- Support pre-positioning of state emergency response resources in rural, underserved, and high-risk areas to improve response times and community outcomes during disasters.
- Increase flexible state funding through both grants and direct allocations to support local emergency management capacity, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and eliminate burdensome match requirements and overly restrictive eligibility criteria.
- Establish a state-managed Individual Assistance program to provide recovery support to disaster survivors in events that do not meet FEMA thresholds but still have significant local impacts.
- Support expanded and recurring state-funded training opportunities for emergency management personnel in rural areas to address knowledge gaps and support local capacity building.
- Increase Train-the-Trainer program availability to enable rural counties to develop in-house training capacity for emergency management staff and volunteers.
- Support state investment in the training and qualifications of Cal OES Emergency Services Coordinators (ESCs) already assigned to counties, ensuring they have the expertise and resources necessary to lead localized training programs and provide technical assistance to Operational Areas.
- Advocate for state policies and programs that encourage and simplify the involvement of local businesses and contractors in disaster recovery operations, such as debris removal and reconstruction, to ensure financial resources and job opportunities stay within impacted communities rather than being awarded to large companies based outside the impacted regions.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Ensure maximum reimbursement to local governments, residents, and businesses impacted by federally declared and non-declared disasters.

- Support the implementation of federal rules that prevent post-recovery “funding claw-backs” and oppose any efforts to withhold promised recovery dollars.
- Advocate for sustained FEMA technical assistance to help local staff navigate complex regulatory and reporting requirements tied to disaster relief.
- Encourage creation of federal programs to provide financial and direct support to households affected by disasters, even in the absence of a federal disaster declaration, particularly for those underinsured or uninsured.
- Support federal insurance market reforms that improve the affordability and accessibility of home and property insurance in high-risk wildfire zones.
- Advocate for immediate deployment of case management services post-disaster to assist survivors with access to aid, housing, mental health services, and long-term recovery resources.
- Support increased federal investment in resilient infrastructure, including energy systems, communications, transportation networks, and water security, especially in rural and underserved regions.
- Promote federal initiatives and contracting reforms that facilitate the participation of local companies in disaster response and recovery efforts, prioritizing the use of local labor and businesses to support economic recovery and community resilience in disaster-affected areas.

FIRE & EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

ISSUE: Mendocino County partners with 22 local fire agencies to provide comprehensive all-hazard fire and emergency medical services (EMS) and mutual aid throughout the county. Fire agencies struggle to raise revenues to meet increasing service demands and mandates. Deferred staffing, training, facility, and equipment needs threaten local and regional response capacity. Recognizing that local fire agencies are critical to public safety, Mendocino County advocates for state and federal policies that provide funding, support, technical assistance, and resources to these agencies.

STATE & FEDERAL ACTION

- Advocate for and support statewide fire service initiatives led by the Fire District Association of California (FDAC) and CalChiefs that seek to correct decades of underfunding, perpetuating financial instability and difficulties meeting new mandates.
- Advocate for and support the expansion of grant programs to fund the recruitment and retention of fire and EMS personnel, and advocate for dedicated technical assistance and administrative capacity to help small rural agencies access, qualify, and manage grants.
- Advocate for and support changes to the Fire Code that promote equitable fees and taxation regulations for all property types.
- Advocate for and support maximum and timely reimbursement for participation in state and federal incident responses.
- Advocate for and support regulations, funding, or legislation to ease the maintenance, construction, and upgrading of critical fire infrastructure such as fire stations, training facilities, and water storage or suppression systems.
- Advocate for and support resources and policy flexibility to help rural and volunteer fire agencies meet standards related to minimum staffing, personal protective equipment, and apparatus replacement.
- Advocate for and support the development of programs that provide tangible benefits to volunteer firefighters or emergency medical personnel, such as health insurance subsidies, retirement incentives, or tax rebates to strengthen recruitment and retention of volunteers in rural areas.

- Advocate for and support investment in fire and EMS training opportunities within Mendocino County to build capacity and meet standards.

NATURAL RESOURCES

ISSUE: Mendocino County supports efforts to conserve and preserve the county's natural resources to help restore its fisheries, maintain healthy forests, support clean reliable water supplies, and ensure agriculture is preserved for future generations. The County supports activities and policies that promote responsible land management that integrate local government involvement in federal and state land management decisions. The County supports increased state and federal funding for public land management to address deferred maintenance of infrastructure in forests and fire prevention and mitigation activities.

STATE ACTION

- Support state funding for implementation of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP).
- Support state funding for storm water infrastructure improvements and compliance with storm water quality regulations.
- Advocate for recycling and organic waste reduction legislation that take into account the needs of rural communities.
- Advocate for legislation to allow and streamline the process for water districts to consolidate districts.
- Support state funding for drought response and infrastructure to facilitate water resiliency in rural communities.
- Support state funding for flood response and infrastructure, as droughts happen, floods follow including post-wildfire debris flows.
- Support the restoration of Williamson Act (the California Land Conservation Act) Subvention funds. Mendocino County, like most other rural counties, is dependent on state funding to offset the loss of property tax revenue to the County. Without a resumption of subvention payments, the County budget will suffer a detrimental impact.
- Support the development and expansion of Cap-and-Invest funding programs specifically targeted at rural communities.
- Support state and federal local assistance, financial resources, regulatory relief and assistance with outreach and coordination efforts to address health and safety risk from dead and dying trees, including areas within the coastal range overseen by the California Coastal Commission.
- Advocate for state assistance for the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission (IWPC) to preserve the water supply provided by the Potter Valley Project for the tens of thousands of people who use the water domestically, for agriculture, and for environmental uses in the Russian River watershed.
- Prioritize projects that reduce or prohibit development and vehicle miles traveled potential on conservation lands, open space, agriculture and working lands, and important watersheds.
- Support and promote new and innovative programs and projects that capture carbon, such as vegetation management, urban greening, and land use planning.
- Support parks and open space lands, as public natural resources.
- Support local control of groundwater management, including well drilling standards and permitting.
- Support fisheries riparian habitat restoration funding in Mendocino County.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Support reasonable interpretation of the US Supreme Court May 23, 2023, ruling on what constitutes "Waters of the United States" as defined by the US EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to

not include ephemeral streams, drainage ditches or seasonal wetland areas that aren't vernal pools.

- Support restoring full mandatory funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which compensates public lands counties for untaxable Federal land.
- Support long-term Federal reauthorization and full funding for Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS), which provides funding for rural counties and school districts to replace revenue from dwindling forest receipts due to national decline in timber harvesting.
- Engage with United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and other federal land management agencies to ensure that local communities are consulted regarding land management issues including recreation, fire management and law enforcement.
- Advocate for assistance for the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission (IWPC) to preserve the water supply provided by the Potter Valley Project for the tens thousands of people who use the water domestically, for agriculture, and for environmental uses in the Russian River watershed.
- Support the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission (IWPC) in the efforts with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to raise Coyote Dam at Lake Mendocino and secure the related water supply.
- Advocate for improving water quality from Lake Mendocino water releases to protect Russian River fish and wildlife.
- Support fisheries riparian habitat restoration funding in Mendocino County.
- Oppose any new or expanded offshore oil and gas drilling along the California coastline. Support legislative efforts to protect ocean and coastal resources.

AGRICULTURE

ISSUE – Invasive Species: Significant invasive species are routinely introduced and detected in California, threatening agriculture and the environment. Continued funding for pest exclusion, detection, tracking and survey activities, rapid response, pest management and eradication (if feasible), and public education outreach programs are critical in protecting California's resources.

STATE ACTION

- Protect existing revenue sources and enhance state and federal funding of Pest Prevention Program activities.
- Support legislation and programs for effective pest management and eradication activities.
- Support sustainable pest management through the continued support of high-risk pest prevention and pest detection programs.

ISSUE - Invasive Weed Management Funding: Invasive, noxious, or non-native weeds continue to proliferate on public and private lands throughout California, posing a threat to the state's critical infrastructure, biodiversity, and ecological integrity. Weed Management Areas (WMAs) have been formed around the state to bring together all stakeholders concerned about invasive weed control within their respective areas.

STATE ACTION

- Support federal and state legislation and resources that would provide stable funding for Weed Management Areas (WMAs) or programs for the control of harmful non-native or invasive weed pests.

ISSUE – Pesticide Use: The County Agricultural Commissioner, under the direction of the Director of the

California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), is responsible for enforcing pesticide laws and regulations at the local level. Working with DPR, the pesticide use enforcement program promotes reduced-risk pest management strategies, assesses human health risks from pesticides, licenses pest control businesses, and monitors pesticide residue in the environment.

STATE ACTION

- Support methods that would provide long-term stable funding for County pesticide regulatory activities.
- Oppose legislation that challenges the preemptive status of state pesticide laws and authority provided to the Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) and California Agricultural Commissioners.
- Support legislative proposals regulating the sale and use of pesticides based on scientific evidence and support California's critical infrastructure of laws and regulations, which has tremendous benefits for our county, its residents, and the environment.

ISSUE – Marketplace Equity & Consumer Protection: Weights and Measures Programs are essential to businesses and consumers in California. Weights and Measures regulatory activities ensure a “level playing field” for businesses and industries. Likewise, these programs are critical in providing consumer protection and a method for making value comparisons by providing equity in the marketplace. The Division of Measurement Standards (DMS) within the California Department of Food and Agriculture is the lead agency for weights and measures. DMS has incurred significant general fund reductions that have diminished its ability to provide consumer protection.

STATE ACTION

- Support legislation that preserves and enhances funding resources for weights and measures programs at the state (DMS) and local (Sealer) level for consumer protection.
- Encourage using state general funds for the Division of Measurement Standards.
- Support legislation that assures clear labeling and accuracy of the net quantity of packaged products to promote value comparison and ensure the consumer receives the correct product and the quantity for which they pay.
- Oppose legislation allowing for industry self-certification of commercial weighing and measuring devices.
- Oppose legislation that would diminish or remove protections now afforded to consumers for transactions measured by weighing or measuring devices or computed by point-of-sale systems.
- Support legislation establishing funding for metrology, quantity control, package inspection, weighmaster, and testing standards for electric vehicle charging stations to meet state-mandated requirements.

ISSUE – Cannabis: California’s Compassionate Use Act (1996) allowed cannabis cultivation but left regulatory gaps. The Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act (Prop 215) and Proposition 64 (2016) expanded legalization. SB 94 (2017) unified medical and adult-use laws, giving Mendocino County Agriculture/Weights & Measures a regulatory role in enforcing state licensing requirements. State cannabis laws define the responsibilities of Agricultural Commissioners and Weights and Measures officials in regulating pesticides and ensuring consumer protection for cannabis businesses. Mendocino County's Commissioners/Sealer faces limited funding and resources to meet these responsibilities and new mandates. When statutory fees do not cover costs, County general funds must make up the difference.

STATE ACTION

- Support legislation recognizing cannabis as an agricultural commodity.
- Oppose legislation creating local mandates or programs that:

- Do not provide 100% funding and resources for additional regulatory activities carried out by Agricultural Commissioners or Sealers.
- Impair local land use authority.
- Fail to provide adequate security for commissioner/sealer staff.
- Create interference between cannabis regulation and existing authorities granted to the Commissioner/Sealers.
- Do not provide support or transparency to the County agricultural commissioner staff for carrying out contracted work.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ISSUE: Communities prosper when ideas, programs, and activities drive economic growth and enhance quality of life. Economic and community development involves more than a jobs or small business program, it's an investment in growing our local economy and enhancing the prosperity and quality of life for all residents. These programs can lead to increased tax revenues, job growth, and increased community prosperity. Local jurisdictions are often limited in the types of tools and resources which they can employ for encouraging development activity in their own regions. The County supports legislative efforts designed to foster development tools and funding options for effective programs and job creation. The County supports legislative efforts that promote strategic land use and effective, locally driven solutions that reflect its rural character and will work proactively with state and federal partners to secure a vibrant future for its residents.

STATE ACTION

- Promote legislation that positively impacts a jurisdiction's ability to engage in and implement economic development programs and policies.
- Encourage, enhance and engage regional collaboration on economic development.
- Advocate for regulations and legislation that promote rural business economic development and supports infrastructure needs of small rural businesses.
- Oppose legislation or regulatory actions that disproportionately negatively impact rural and small businesses.
- Encourage the development and implementation of a statewide "proactive" California business retention strategy, led by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). The County supports partnerships with local economic development organizations.
- Support legislation that increases the competitive position of the State of California, its geographical areas, and its jurisdictions.
- Advocate for state grant funding opportunities to support community initiatives and projects that promote economic development and infrastructure improvements in alignment with the County's Strategic Plan and the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Advocate for legislation that incorporates clean energy and increases economic development efforts, especially in jobs that reduce utility costs and address the County's high hazard risks.
- Advocate for comprehensive workforce training programs focused on installing local power generation technologies and clean energy systems.
- Support legislation to broaden eligibility and access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early learning programs, and increase childcare workers' compensation and professional development opportunities.
- Advocate for greater flexibility in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to reduce paperwork and regulatory burdens for smaller jurisdictions, making the program more accessible and effective. Support a renewed California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) focus on providing technical assistance, specifically to those jurisdictions with limited resources.

- Support legislation that maintains and strengthens tax increment financing tools for communities.
- Support legislation that provides ongoing State funding for mandated planning projects such as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), General Plan Housing Element updates, and other planning initiatives under AB 32 and SB 375.
- Promote a full range of housing in all communities to better address the housing needs and solutions in rural communities.
- Support the repeal of Article 34 of the California Constitution, which would reduce administrative burden on local governments around affordable housing development.
- Support expansion of state tax incentives for the provision of affordable housing. The tax codes and financial industry regulations need to be revised to provide stimulus to produce affordable housing, particularly for median, low, and very low-income households.
- Oppose legislation that creates restrictions on local control of land use and development.
- Oppose legislation that reduces local governments', tribes', and communities' ability to weigh in on projects.
- Advocate for Coastal Act reform of allowable exemptions to allow minor repair and maintenance to existing structures located within 50 feet of a coastal bluff and the installation of roof-mount solar panels on all structures without the need to obtain a Coastal Development Permit. Oppose legislative actions or reform measures that penalize jurisdictions for non-compliance with state-mandated Housing Element update schedules.
- Broadband Deployment
 - Support "Dig Once/Trench Once" and other policies which streamline the deployment of conduit for underground fiber-optic and electrical cables and minimize regulatory burdens and permitting processes for deployment of internet connectivity.
 - Advocate to maximize broadband infrastructure investment and equitable county-wide connectivity from the delivery of Middle and Last Mile projects under SB 156 and other State and Federal funds. In addition to exploring options that would include wireless and satellite technology in providing internet service delivery where underground fiber-optic is not possible or feasible.
- Support and monitor the development and deployment of a robust county-wide Middle Mile open access fiber-optic backbone to stimulate economic development and affordable broadband availability to homes, businesses, schools, libraries, public safety facilities, health services, and other institutions throughout Mendocino County.
- Advocate for complete and accurate broadband connectivity data needed for smart policy and design decisions required to effectively bridge the growing digital divide.
- Advocate for strongly encouraging, if not requiring, last mile to the consumer broadband providers to supply equitable service to all potential customers as part of a new area service acquisition.
- Support legislation that provides resources to improve rural counties access to high-speed broadband. The County also supports legislation that protects access to broadband service.
- Support and advocate for sustained access to reliable and affordable telecommunication services for the County's diverse communities.
- Support legislation and funding that advances sustainable tourism and equitable access to outdoor recreation by local populations.
- Advocate for federal and state resources for outdoor recreation and trails.
- Promote funding for outdoor education initiatives that teach safety, conservation, and responsible recreation practices. This includes programs for youth and underserved communities to support a culture of stewardship and safety in outdoor spaces.
- Support policies to advance tribal stewardship, ecological restoration, and outdoor access at State Demonstration Forests.
- Advocate for secured long-term, ongoing funding, maintenance, and planning of the Great Redwood Trail.
- Support legislation and funding for increased educational programs with hands on training in

trade skills, craft, and engineering. This includes paths for youth to access internships and educational certificate programs.

- Support legislation and regulatory reforms that reduce barriers to small farms and food producers participating in farmers' markets, as they help strengthen local economies and advance community food security.
- Support efforts to reduce barriers to entry and expand market access for local home-based and small-scale food producers.
- Advocate for and pursue funding assistance to help the County keep fees affordable for residents and businesses, while sustaining high-quality services and effective program delivery.
- Support the Market Match/CalFresh EBT program, which supports small farms and local producers and increases access to fresh produce for our community.
- Advocate for sustainable funding for public art and culture, including education, and support of artists to produce and maintain public art through grants and endowments.
- Support community access to local libraries and advocate for broadband equity, the freedom to read and to access diverse points of view, literacy for all ages, and intellectual freedom.
- Advocate for additional grant funding for libraries who provide services to vulnerable populations such as Lunch at the Library which provides literacy-rich activities for libraries working with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) lunch providers to offer nutritious lunches to children 18 and under who might not have access to lunches over the summer break and JobNow, VetNow, and LearnNow to support education for vulnerable populations.
- Support efforts to promote local school-museum partnerships to provide engaging, hands-on learning opportunities. Advocate for additional state and grant support for regional museum's role as vital education providers and keepers of primary source material.
- Advocate for increased and ongoing funding to expand community spay and neuter clinics, reducing shelter intake and promoting responsible pet ownership through accessible preventive care.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Advocate for support and continuation of federal funds and programs that support and promote rural communities and businesses.
- Support efforts by the administration and congress to increase the nation's infrastructure investments to help promote economic development, public safety, and overall mobility through a comprehensive infrastructure package, surface transportation reauthorization and water resources bill.
- Advocate for federal grant funding opportunities to support community initiatives and projects that promote economic development and infrastructure improvements in alignment with the County's Strategic Plan and the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Advocate for complete and accurate broadband connectivity data, which is necessary to effectively bridge the growing digital divide as the federal government relies on this information to determine the true need for critical broadband resources.
- Support the deployment and availability of broadband and emerging technology, to rural communities to ensure equitable economic and educational opportunities for all.
- Advocate for federal funding for rural airport infrastructure projects.
- Advocate for the expansion of federal tax credits to better meet the statewide need for subsidized affordable housing units.
- Advocate for a change in federal tax law to eliminate current tax incentives for short-term rentals, as these federal tax incentives are leading to the conversion of housing for year-round residents to a commercial use of housing for the purpose of short-term rentals for visitors.
- Advocate for funding for combating censorship and aid for libraries and librarians who are encountering challenges.
- Support funding for US Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal sites for Lunch at the Library.

- Advocate for funding for programs that support services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).
- Advocate for federal education programs in which the Mendocino Museum participates.

OTHER ACTION

- Support initiatives to create meaningful government-to-government consultation and collaboration with Tribal Governments to bolster sound and sustainable economic development in local Tribal Lands and the County.

CANNABIS

ISSUE: Mendocino County is a pre-eminent producer county in the State of California, home to a very large number of multi-generational cultivators, manufacturers, and other added-value cannabis industry participants. Nearly 20 years after California voters legalized medical cannabis via Proposition 215 (1996), the State legislature passed the Medical Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act (MCRSA) in 2015 to license, regulate, and address the impacts of commercial medical cannabis businesses. Then in November 2016, voters passed Proposition 64, the “California Control, Regulate and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Initiative,” also known as the “Adult Use of Marijuana Act” (AUMA). These laws have since been consolidated to form the “Medical and Adult Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act” (MAUCRSA), Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 26000 et seq., which is administered by the Department of Cannabis Control (DCC).

As the State continues to develop regulations for this industry, consideration must be given to the difficulties facing small cannabis operators in rural communities, unable to compete in the emerging legal market if it demands large sums of investment to scale up and meet regulatory requirements. Mendocino County will continue to advocate for maintaining local government’s flexibility and authority to address individual community needs through local control measures. As Mendocino County implements local and state regulations, funding assistance will be critical to ensuring successful integration of the cannabis industry into the legal economy. Mendocino County supports federal initiatives to either repeal or modify the federal prohibition of cannabis and encourages federal recognition of state laws regulating cannabis.

STATE ACTION

- Support legislation which enhances the economic viability of small-scale cultivators.
- Support legislation promoting small cultivator access to markets and minimizing costs, barriers, and regulations for microbusiness enterprises.
- Advocate for a reduction in the state excise tax as a means to support the economic recovery of small businesses and quell competition with the illicit market.
- Advocate for state resources to assist cannabis operators navigate the complex regulatory system, understand compliance requirements, and access grant or business development opportunities.
- Advocate for state funding and technical assistance to enable the County to build upon and coordinate with state education, outreach, and engagement efforts, ensuring local initiatives effectively complement statewide programs.
- Advocate for cannabis cultivation to be considered an agricultural crop produced for human consumption and regulated in the California Food and Agricultural Code rather than the Business and Professions Code.
- Advocate for the removal of the state regulatory prohibition on cannabis activities within a residence so that local jurisdictions can implement cottage industry codes allowing commercial cannabis businesses the ability to conduct activities analogous to those of non-cannabis related cottage industry businesses.
- Advocate for licensed commercial cannabis business to have access to state-funded disaster relief, technical assistance programs and grant programs.

- Advocate for the simplification of the state’s commercial cannabis licensing framework and regulations in a manner that reduces barriers to entry into the legal market, protects public health and safety, and ensures a regulated environment for commercial cannabis activities that does not impose such barriers as to perpetuate, rather than reduce and eliminate, the illicit market for cannabis.
- Advocate for the ability of licensed cultivators to conduct multiple types of cultivation under a single license.
- Advocate that the DCC establish a simple process for cultivation license holders to conduct cultivation license type changes and cultivation license size changes.
- Advocate that the DCC allow for “batch tagging” of mature cannabis plants and harvested cannabis material in METRC similarly to what is currently allowed for immature plant tagging.
- Advocate for regulatory reform that allows locally permitted and state licensed cultivators to:
 - Receive genetic material from any permitted and licensed commercial cannabis business entity,
 - Transfer genetic material to other permitted and licensed cultivators,
 - Support the development of a legal pathway for entering no-source cannabis seeds into METRC by establishing a compliant method for sourcing and documenting origin.
- Advocate for state and federal policy changes that establishes opportunities for cultivators, processors, and manufactures to engage in direct-to-consumer sales, including through cannabis events, direct to consumer delivery operations, direct to consumer shipping and on-farm sales.
- Advocate that the DCC conduct annual audits of licensed distribution businesses to monitor how much cannabis material being sold within the supply chain is produced by permitted and licensed cultivators and how much is produced by unpermitted and unlicensed cultivators.
- Advocate for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to develop educational materials and guidance documents that clarify and support the development of appellation of origin petitions.
- Advocate for the promulgation of comprehensive labeling requirements for all cannabis geographical indications, including county of origin, city of origin, city and county of origin, and appellation of origin designations.
- Advocate for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to be sufficiently funded to manage the appellation of origin program and the establishment of a petition review panel.
- Advocate for state and federal legislation, funding and resources to combat illegal trespass cultivation of cannabis on public and private lands.
- Support adequate funding and resources to address illegal water diversion, water pollution, erosion, poisoning of wildlife, and other environmental damage associated with trespass cannabis growing operations.
- Support the state fully funding County cannabis related expenditures including legislation that clarifies that cannabis related expenditures are reportable expenses for the purpose of calculating unclaimed gas tax reimbursements to County Agricultural Commissioners or cannabis expenditures will not count against maintenance of effort calculations.
- Support non-competitive or direct allocation of state cannabis tax revenue for small and rural counties.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Support federal legislation that allows cannabis to be regulated at the federal level, including removing cannabis from Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act. The County takes the position that any change to the legal status of cannabis at the federal level must be accompanied by a thorough regulatory framework that delineates the clear roles and responsibilities of the jurisdictions involved.
- Advocate for commercial cannabis production to be legally designated and regulated as commercial agricultural activity, regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture

(USDA).

- Support efforts at the federal level to allow for and make available banking and other financial services to cannabis operators in order to minimize the use of cash.
- Advocate for changes to the Federal Tax Code to ensure that state licensed commercial cannabis businesses are taxed in the same manner as non-cannabis businesses, including but not limited to, advocating for the elimination of Federal Tax Code Section 280E.

PUBLIC SAFETY

ISSUE: Mendocino County strongly supports community safety by providing high quality public safety services to maintain health and safety standards for its residents. The County supports additional state and federal funding and tools to enhance law enforcement programs and the safety of its residents and public safety employees. It is recognized that the state, and not the County, is responsible for trial court operations costs and any growth in those costs in the future. Nevertheless, counties continue to be responsible for justice-related services, such as, but not limited to, probation, prosecutorial and defense services, as well as the provision of local juvenile and adult detention facilities. Therefore, it is imperative there is secure, stable, and sufficient funding allocated to Mendocino County to fulfill the state responsibilities mandated to the local level to implement. The County firmly opposes future and further unfunded state mandates.

STATE ACTION

- Advocate for adequate, secure, and stable funding to support the implementation of evidence-based practices mandated by realignment.
 - The County believes that the state should assume cost increases associated with state imposed program changes and expansions, as well as federal maintenance of effort mandates.
 - Oppose state and/or federal funding reductions that shift responsibility for services, administration, or fiscal support to counties.
 - Oppose state mandates that increase County responsibilities without adequate resources.
 - Oppose shifting state responsibilities to counties without full funding and administrative support.
 - Advocate for greater County flexibility and local control in implementing any realigned responsibilities.
- Advocate for and support policies that balance community safety and accountability with rehabilitation. Policies should not overlook one tenet in order to achieve another. Further, policies should not dilute or disregard accountability as a necessary component in achieving rehabilitation.
- Advocate for a sustainable new state funding source dedicated to both treatment and accountability, ensuring counties can effectively cover all implementation and ongoing costs associated with Proposition 36.
- Oppose policies that dilute, redirect or recast the mission and funding associated with 2011 Public Safety Realignment.
- Oppose any further redirection of state responsibilities to the local level without full local control and appropriate funding.
- Advocate for state and federal funds to offset costs of the behavioral health wing of the new jail.
- Support additional state funding for pre-trial service under SB 129 (CA Budget Act 2021: Statewide Pretrial Program). Support a conversation around SB 678 (Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act) and SB 129 making sure funding is more stable and secure.
- Advocate for an increase in funding due to SB 823 (Department of Juvenile Justice Realignment Implementation) and the insufficient funding the formula created.
- Oppose legislation that would directly or indirectly shift costs related to state prisoners that are

transferred under realignment to counties.

- Support additional permanent and stable state back-fill to cover the counties' revenue loss resulting from AB 1869 (Criminal Fees) in 2020, the removal of criminal justice fines, fee, and penalties by the Legislature.
 - Urge policymakers and stakeholders to extend and fully fund California's fines and fees backfill program beyond 2026.
 - Advocate for legislative commitment to compensate counties for lost revenue from eliminated criminal justice administrative fees and to protect funding for essential local programs and services.
- Support permanent, stable, and consistent funding of SB 678 (Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act) in light of AB 1950 (Probation: length of terms).
- Oppose any additional state efforts to change criminal justice fines, fees, and penalties without providing a corresponding revenue back-fill that is permanent and stable.
- Support reform of state laws that would increase hard drug crime and theft penalties.
- Support state efforts to increase penalties for dealing hard drugs such as fentanyl and provide local jurisdictions sufficient resources to enforce legislation, target drug trafficking as well as provide substance use treatment and harm reduction programs in prisons and juvenile facilities.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Support amending the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy under the Social Security Act to remove limitations on Medicaid, Medicare, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Veteran's Affairs health services benefits for pre-trial inmates of public institutions.
- Support policies and programs that divert non-violent individuals struggling with mental illness and/or substance use disorders from local jails into more appropriate treatment services.

HUMAN SERVICES

ISSUE: Mendocino County is committed to the delivery of public social services at the local level. However, the County requires adequate and ongoing federal and state funding, timely distribution of funding, maximum local authority, and flexibility for the administration and provision of public social services. Counties should have the ability to expand or consolidate facilities, services, and program contracts to provide a comprehensive level of service and accountability and achieve maximum cost effectiveness. Counties face challenges in providing services to the increasing numbers of individuals and families in need. During economic downturns, counties experience a greater demand for assistance from vital safety net programs. Even in prosperous economic times, many people struggle to meet their basic needs. Therefore, any additional federal or state funding should be directly shared with counties for programs that require a county share of cost.

Recent policy changes have disrupted the historic partnership among federal, state, and local entities regarding the provision of social services by shifting costs to the local level and cutting critical programs. This will force Mendocino County to shoulder unsustainable financial and administrative burdens, jeopardizing services. As a result, many of Mendocino County's 41,749 Medi-Cal enrollees (46% of the county's population) may face the loss of vital coverage. Reduced funding and new administrative rules will further strain rural and tribal health systems, limit care for high-risk residents, and deepen existing disparities. The County urges policymakers to introduce and support legislation that restores funding, guarantees coverage for Medi-Cal enrollees, and allocates direct support to Mendocino County to maintain essential care and service delivery.

STATE ACTION

- Oppose unfunded cost shifts to counties resulting from changes to human services programs and

advocate for mitigation efforts to protect and preserve access to nutrition, healthcare, and childcare programs by maintaining adequate eligibility and funding levels.

- Advocate for resources to offset increased local service demand caused by reductions in benefits and seek relief from added administrative burdens by promoting simplified reporting and adequate funding for program administration.
- Support legislative efforts to provide sustaining wages to IHSS workers while limiting the County's obligation to increases in local required funding.
- Support efforts to sustain funding for Health and Human Services safety-net programs and regulations, including: CalFresh Categorical Eligibility; School Lunch Programs; Health Care Enrollment (inmates); Preventing Elder and Dependent Care Abuse; Fees and Charges for Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly; Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; Drug Abuse Prevention and Safe Disposal Program; Childhood Vaccinations; and Child Welfare Services.
- Advocate for and support Enhanced Care Management (ECM) provisions and insurers, increasing services to the County Medi-Cal population.
- Advocate for the allocation of additional realignment revenues. Current cost-sharing ratios no longer reflect counties' long-term ability to control costs in the programs.
- Support funding incentives for homeless providers who develop and implement meaningful and integrated workforce development programs.
- Support funding for small business wage subsidies to hire homeless and recently homeless individuals.
- Support efforts to build capacity within local child welfare agencies to serve child victims of commercial sexual exploitation as commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a growing national and statewide issue. The County believes this complex problem warrants immediate attention, including funding for prevention, intervention, and direct services through child welfare services agencies, and supports close cooperation on CSEC issues with law enforcement, the judiciary, and community-based organizations to ensure the best outcomes for child victims.
- Advocate for the full commitment to ongoing funding for the Bringing Families Home program. This program through California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provides flexible housing support to our most vulnerable households with children experiencing homelessness served by Child Welfare Services. This program clearly leads to a quicker timeline for family reunification and/or prevention of entry into foster care.
- Advocate for the acceleration of policies and procedures that would allow phone-based application assistance for Medi-Cal through BenefitsCal. Without easy phone-based application support, eligible clients currently in jail or those with limited online proficiency skills are at a distinct disadvantage in accessing health coverage and care.
- Support adequate state funding for adoption services and post-permanency supportive services.
- Support the ability of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to streamline the process of transferring Foster Family Agency (FFA) resource family home approvals to another FFA or to the County to ensure that families and foster children in their care continue to receive support from agencies uninterrupted.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Urge Congress to reject provisions in legislation that shift the financial burden of human services programs to counties by reducing or eliminating federal funding.
 - Advocate that Congress provide sufficient federal resources to fully offset any increased local service demand caused by reductions or restrictions in federal benefits.
 - Advocate for simplified reporting, eligibility, and compliance requirements, and for sufficient administrative funding so counties can focus resources on direct service delivery.
 - Advocate for the inclusion of strong protections to prevent disproportionate harm to rural residents, people with disabilities, other vulnerable populations, and the organizations that serve them.

- Support the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Medicaid waivers for California. The new Cal-AIM waiver proposal is essential to enhance services at the local level particularly regarding mental health, substance use treatment services and homeless services.
 - Medicaid/Medi-Cal waiver projects have allowed for substantial funding and local expansion of services outside of traditional Medi-Cal billable services, including the Whole Person Care waiver pilot that has enhanced mental health and homeless services. And more recently, the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System pilot to expand substance use treatment services.
- Support increased and ongoing federal funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) programs, with appropriations matching the levels of authorized funding.
- Support funding and seek appropriations to improve senior transportation services.

PUBLIC HEALTH

ISSUE: Counties are mandated to protect Californians against threats of widespread disease and illness and are tasked with promoting health and wellness. Mendocino County supports and encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional approaches to health care and efforts to create cost-saving partnerships between the state and counties, and other partners to improve health outcomes and health equity. Counties appreciate recent investments in public health, but they remain concerned about the lack of funding and flexibility in funding, planning, and ongoing support for critical public health infrastructure. In addition, counties face severe workforce challenges that are exacerbated when new public health crises emerge. It is important for the state and federal governments to collaborate with counties to provide timely and adequate funding and technical assistance. This is necessary to ensure proper planning, access to medical supplies, and laboratory testing services and maintain a capable workforce to effectively respond to any health emergency.

STATE ACTION

- Advocate for the implementation of a regional public health model that coordinates public health services across multiple jurisdictions to enhance the effectiveness, resource allocation, and response capacity.
- Support expansion of data sharing agreements for Public Health and other programs as required by the State to improve prevention and intervention care coordination.
- Support expansion of State staffing to facilitate funding for Maternal Child and Adolescent Health programs, for evidence-based Home Visiting (HV) programs promoted by California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and adolescent health and mental health.
- Advocate and fund Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ) health data scientists and epidemiologists in Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Social Services.
- Advocate for increased funding for essential local public health responsibilities including workforce development, facilities, communicable disease prevention and response, and public health prevention and health equity activities.
- Support funding for and legislative support of Community Healthcare Workers (CHW) as well as development of career pathways for these CHWs.
- Advocate for increasing allocation to Public Health Emergency Preparedness to build sustainability of preparedness in public health infrastructure and staff.
- Support statewide single-payer healthcare systems to streamline healthcare delivery and eliminate gaps in coverage.
- Support sustainable funding for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems.
- Support ongoing and increased assistance by the state in providing epidemiologist services and efforts to prepare for the next pandemic.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Advocate for increased federal support in growing and retaining a highly skilled public health workforce.
- Support ongoing federal aid to local government to prepare for the next pandemic.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

ISSUE: County behavioral health services are central to many difficult policy issues such as homelessness, housing, and justice system recidivism and diversion. One in five adults experience some form of mental illness in any given year. Across the population, 1 in every 25 adults is living with a serious mental health condition such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or long-term recurring major depression. Treatment for these conditions is often not sought due to inaccessibility to services, coverage and reimbursement barriers or the patient is unaware that other physical symptoms could be connected to a mental health condition.

State and federal resources and flexibility are needed to improve access to mental health and substance misuse disorder treatment in rural communities and address racial inequities. Counties need resources to expand access to evidence-based suicide awareness and prevention training. Importantly, legislation that helps expand, support and sustain behavioral health workforce is necessary to meet these needs.

STATE ACTION

- Support additional funding and programs that provide improved access to local mental health services and substance misuse disorder, including increased and consistent funding for mental health housing programs, crisis support, and jail diversion programs and services for foster youth with complex needs.
- Support insurance parity for mental health services to ensure residents with private insurance have the same services available as those with Medi-Cal.
- Advocate for the legislature to review the innovation component of the Mental Health Services Act for accountability. Innovations in rural, suburban, and urban counties vary drastically and should be evaluated based on local demographics.
- Advocate for state and federal funds to offset costs of the Behavioral Health wing of the new jail.
- Support the integration of behavioral health into the broader health care system and a balance between state expectations and local authority.
- Advocate for support of mental health initiatives for seniors and other vulnerable residents.
- Advocate for maximization of funding for inmate medical and mental health care services.
- Advocate for increased availability of inpatient psychiatric beds.
- Advocate for the needs of county residents and for full funding for associated county costs for implementing CARE Act.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Advocate for reform of the Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion language which bars Medicaid from receiving federal dollars to pay for mental health and substance use care provided in facilities with more than 16 beds which leads to a stark inequity in access to care. Unlike in Medicare or private insurance, Medicaid cannot cover many inpatient psychiatric services, even when they are recommended by a physician or mental health professional.
- Support federal investment, including funding from court settlements, in mental health and substance use disorder workforce, training, prevention and treatment.

HOMELESSNESS

ISSUE: Like many other California counties, Mendocino County is grappling with the challenges posed by homelessness. The issue is visible on public streets, creek beds, and open spaces and has a profound impact on affected households. The limited availability of housing and rentals significantly contributes to the county's transient and homeless population. Homelessness affects public spaces, public safety, child welfare, behavioral health and substance use services, and small businesses. The presence of homeless encampments also has a significant impact on local businesses and warrants attention and addressing.

STATE ACTION

- Advocate for a simplified, streamlined, block grant funding allocation to counties, for a five-year time span, specifically and exclusively for the costs of trash and hazardous waste removal at recently vacated homeless encampments. This funding source should be automatically allocated and delinked from requirements to provide social or other services. The focus should be on clean-up only from vacated homeless sites.
- Advocate for increased or sustained funding to prevent and end homelessness through direct allocations to the county directly or the local continuum of care (COC), as the counties are responsible for the broad scope of services and mandates provided to successfully move individuals out of homelessness; sustainable and flexible state funding sources to enable communities to serve more people with outreach, shelter, eviction prevention, supportive housing, and short term rent assistance programs; establishment of immediate solutions to address encampments.
- Advocate for a simplified and streamlined allocation and administration process for the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Grant program, along with clear, reasonable, and achievable accountability measures that support local flexibility and effectiveness.
- Advocate for ongoing operating subsidy support for existing Project Homekey sites. Counties who have elected to participate and engage in homelessness solutions like Project Homekey should be rewarded and supported with specific ongoing funding to maintain those projects as exemplary best practices in resolving homelessness.
- Support reform for state and federal housing assistance and legislation to allow more inclusive access to housing and services for individuals with prior convictions.
- Advocate for increased direct funding for long-term transitional housing programs that support vulnerable populations, providing them with the stability needed to transition to permanent housing.
- Advocate for greater involvement and coordination between state agencies and local governments in protecting natural resources, such as parks, waterways, and wildlife habitats, from the environmental impacts of homelessness.
- Advocate for state agency funding to mitigate environmental damage caused by encampments, such as waste management, habitat restoration, and water quality protection.
- Advocate for the creation of new sources of funding and incentive programs to produce affordable housing through incentivized jurisdictional cooperation and regional housing planning.
- Support the preservation of mobile home parks as a valuable housing resource.
- Support improving rent stabilization tools, including protections from displacement and unreasonable rent increases for mobile home park tenants.
- Support efforts to ensure that code enforcement does not result in the closure of mobile home parks (or other affordable housing) unless it is an immediate danger to life, health, and safety.
- Support efforts to address disparities in housing by ensuring that disaster recovery resources reach all impacted households, including those with the lowest incomes who are often the hardest hit by disasters and have the fewest resources to recover.
- Advocate for increasing accessibility to levels of support from federal and state food programs.

- Advocate for funding to assist local businesses with security, clean up, and restoration due to homelessness.

FEDERAL ACTION

- Support the preservation of and existing allocation of federal US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rental subsidy funding so that rural communities are able to retain their existing allocation of tenant-based rental assistance certificates.
- Support Rental Assistance and Rapid Rehousing Support to prevent individuals at risk of losing their housing, which has tremendous financial impacts on low-income individuals and families.



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

State & Federal Representatives

GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM (D) GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA	Website: gov.ca.gov 1303 10 th Street, Suite 1173 Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone: 916-445-2841
STATE REPRESENTATIVES	
State Senate	
SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE (D) STATE SENATE DISTRICT 2 200 S. School St., Suite K Ukiah, CA 95482 Phone: 707-468-8914	Website: http://sd02.senate.ca.gov State Capitol 1021 O St., Suite 8610 Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone: 916-651-4002
State Assembly	
ASSEMBLYMEMBER CHRIS ROGERS (D) STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 2 200 S. School St., Suite D Ukiah, CA 95482 Phone: 707-463-5770	Website: http://a02.asmdc.org State Capitol P.O. Box 942849 Sacramento, CA 94249 Phone: 916-319-2002
FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES	
United States Senate	
SENATOR ALEX PADILLA (D) UNITED STATES SENATE 501 I Street, Suite 7-800 Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone: 916-448-2787	Website: www.padilla.senate.gov 331 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone: 202-224-3553
SENATOR ADAM SCHIFF (D) UNITED STATES SENATE 1 Post St. Suite 2450 San Francisco, CA 94104 Phone: 415-393-0707	Website: https://www.schiff.senate.gov/ 112 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone: 202-224-3841
United State House of Representatives	
CONGRESSMAN JARED HUFFMAN (D) CALIFORNIA'S 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 200 S. School St., Ukiah, CA 95482 430 North Franklin St., Fort Bragg, 95437 Phone: 707-671-7449 (Ukiah) Phone: 707-962-0933 (Fort Bragg)	Website: www.huffman.house.gov 2445 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: 202-225-5161



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County of Mendocino Executive Office
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482
Telephone: (707) 463-4441
Fax: (707) 463-5649
Email: ceo@mendocinocounty.gov
Website: www.mendocinocounty.gov/EO
Like us on Facebook: @mendocinocounty
Follow us on X: @countymendocino
Follow us on Instagram: @countyofmendocino