INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Platform is a statement of the goals and priorities of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and establishes the basis for its advocacy efforts with the Executive and Legislative branches of the State of California.

MAJOR LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The County of Fresno supports the following Major Legislative Issues:

- Support sufficient State resources to counties based on the impacts of H.R. 1, including but not limited to, increased costs based on indigent medical care, individuals losing medical coverage, and unfunded administrative and staffing costs based on double eligibility checks and additional review of work requirements. Support additional flexibility for counties to manage the impacts of H.R. 1 locally.
- Support increased State reimbursement to healthcare providers including hospitals and medical professionals serving in disadvantaged/rural areas.
- Support use of State dollars to fund necessary services and programs in the Central Valley, including, but not limited to, completion of the widening (to six lanes) of State Route 99 from Sacramento to its intersection with I-5 in Kern County and expediting appropriations of relevant funding from Proposition 4 for above and below ground water storage projects.
- Support legislative changes to the Health and Safety Code and AB 403 (Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015) to authorize Transitional Shelter Care Facilities to be operated by the State or counties to meet the needs of foster youth with high level or complex needs, as well as a provision of funding for these programs.
- Support San Joaquin Valley regional efforts to ensure a stable, reliable, adequate, quality urban and agricultural water supply to sustain a high quality of life and a world class agricultural sector, while protecting and enhancing the environment; enactment of State appropriations to expand facilities for storing, banking, conveying, distributing, conserving, and reclaiming water; and continued expansion of value-added economic development opportunities.
- Support State funding for emergency protective actions, monitoring of conditions, prescribed fire projects, re-forestation actions, tree mortality mitigation efforts, and other active forest management strategies including thinning and grazing, where prescribed and assistance in protecting against massive firestorms and with recovery and restoration through the expeditious appropriation of funding from Proposition 4 for these purposes.
- Support robust broadband funding initiatives that prioritize close collaboration with statewide stakeholders to ensure equitable and timely distribution of state and federal funds for broadband deployment.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Agriculture

- Support incentives to encourage counties to preserve farmland and open space including full restoration of Williamson Act subventions to ensure preservation of agricultural lands; seek to provide local control for eligibility participation; redirect all or a portion of cancellation fees to the County to help fund administration of the Williamson Act program and local implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act; and explore new funding sources for the preservation of agricultural land.
- Support policies and funding that encourage long-term economic viability of all scales and types of agricultural operations and local markets within the Fresno County food system.
- Support funding, policies, and regulations to mitigate the effects of pests, diseases, freezes, flooding, drought, and other potential damages to our local agricultural industry.
- Support legislation or regulations that provide assistance and/or incentives to landowners fallowing land as a result of water supply reductions or other factors beyond their control.
- Support legislation and funding that supports and keeps agricultural businesses viable.

Child Support Services

- Support increased State funding to the Department of Child Support Services and legislative changes that will help to improve the program's efficiencies and effectiveness in serving customers.

Criminal Justice and Public Protection

- Support adequate funding to assist counties with the implementation of Proposition 36.
- Support additional funding for more inmate education, training, programs, and services to reduce recidivism, as well as funding to assess and evaluate the efficacy of such programs and services.
- Support increased funding allocations that recognize the regional responsibility of public safety agencies to provide mutual aid to surrounding communities.
- Support increased State funding for indigent defense services as mandated by constitutional, statutory, and case law.
- Support state funding for post-conviction indigent defense services pursuant to Penal Code sections 745, 1172.1, 1172.6, 1172.7, 1172.75, 1473.7 and 3051. Post conviction relief services are needed and promote fairness within the criminal justice system, alleviates overcrowding in prisons, and directs resources towards rehabilitation efforts instead of prisons and jails.
- Continued support for Clean Slate programs which facilitates the automatic sealing or expungement of certain criminal records, providing individuals with a second chance to reintegrate into society by removing barriers to employment and housing, ultimately promoting rehabilitation, and reducing recidivism within the community.

- Support enhanced victim compensation requirements for criminal offenders.
- Support increased funding to implement/enhance services to at-risk youth with the goal being to prevent them from entering the juvenile justice system, including reentry support for community reintegration.
- Support strengthening State search and seizure statutes to help combat crime.
- Support funding for local law enforcement training to aid in drug and rural crime prevention, to bolster juvenile justice intervention and prevention efforts, to counteract and prevent gang violence, and to help prepare and equip law enforcement agencies to fulfill their role in preventing and responding to terrorist activity.
- Support State funding for additional judicial positions to address caseload, along with commensurate funding for trial court security based on additional judicial positions and/or expansion in courtrooms requiring additional trial court security.
- Support State funding for any mandated improvements or new construction needed at jail and juvenile facilities to provide required services/programs, including those resulting from implementation of the AB 109 Public Safety Realignment Act and SB 823, Juvenile Justice Realignment.
- Support the continued involvement of the State Department of Justice in local task forces to combat drug trafficking, catalytic converter theft, and organized retail theft.
- Support victims of crime at the State and local level by maintaining sufficient fiscal appropriations that fund Victim Witness Assistance programs, and ensure any proposed legislative changes protects and upholds victims' rights.
- Support legislation that enhances public safety and holds criminals accountable including any legislation that amends the current time credit calculations made by CDCR pursuant to post-Proposition 57 regulation changes and reinstates time credit calculation methodologies that more closely resemble that which existed before the passage of the measure in 2016.
- Support legislation that enhances public safety and promotes transparency by requiring CDCR to make publicly available the manner in which time credits are calculated/awarded to inmates who benefit from accelerated time credits, hence early release, under the current rules and regulatory framework.
- Support legislation that combats the fentanyl epidemic and enhances public safety by appropriately amending the narcotics schedules within the Health & Safety Code to better account for the distinct chemical composition and lethality of fentanyl.
- Support legislation that will require those who are convicted of selling, supplying, giving away or trafficking fentanyl to be advised and acknowledge that selling, supplying, giving away or trafficking fentanyl is extremely dangerous to human life and that if they continue to sell, supply, give away or traffic fentanyl, and as a result of their selling, supplying, giving away or trafficking fentanyl someone is killed, that they can be charged with murder.
- Support state funding for the acquisition, implementation, and maintenance of the technology infrastructure needed due to the new crime charging requirements mandated by Penal Code section 741 (AB 2778).

Economic Development and Workforce Investment

- Support State investment in local infrastructure including, but not limited to roads, pipes, facilities necessary to deliver mandated programs, and electronic infrastructure, such as bandwidth and processing/storage capacity. Support efforts to ensure that internet speed is consistent across California including its most rural areas.
- Support State/local initiatives to provide venture capital for local projects.
- Support tax and financial incentives that will encourage the growth of new and existing businesses in the County.
- Support funding of local education, workforce training and employment-related investment that matches the requirements of growing and emerging industries.
- Support legislation that reduces the cost of doing business in the State through cost reduction measures, streamlined land use and environmental reviews, and permitting processes.
- Support legislation, policies, programs, and other designations that expand community revitalization and economic development tools.

Elections

- Support the authorization and appropriation of funds to provide compensation to County governments for the cost of conducting elections involving statewide and state-level legislative offices during regularly scheduled or special election.
- Support legislation providing election officials additional funding and tools to maintain and clean up voter rolls, including the removal of deceased people and voters who have moved out of state and/or other jurisdictions.
- Support the authorization and appropriation of funds or bonds to provide compensation to local governments to lease or purchase new voting systems, including related components for successful implementation.
- Support legislation to assist counties in the effective implementation of State-mandated changes in the elections process and administration as well as changes made by statewide voter initiatives.
- Support legislative efforts to strengthen locally driven election and redistricting processes and oppose legislative efforts that usurp local control in these processes.
- Support the authorization of secure and effective use of new technologies available in the field of election administration.
- Support authorization for implementation of additional, expanded, and alternative voting opportunities.

Energy/Air Quality

- Support State incentives to encourage development of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal.
- Support the local oil and gas industry.

- Support the encouragement of local siting of renewable energy facilities.
- Support efforts to work collaboratively with the Governor's Administration and the Legislature to maintain sunset of the commercial-scale solar tax exclusion in 2026. The current exclusion usurps local control and must be revised to address lost property taxes it imposes on the Central Valley's local communities that host large-scale renewal energy projects.
- Support restoring counties' authority to assess alternative energy facilities by removing existing exemptions.
- Oppose efforts to exempt other renewable energy facilities from county property tax assessment.
- Support legislation that would increase funding to counties to implement new air quality standards and provide sustainable incentives for persons, businesses, and local government to use or convert to clean technologies, and funding for transit system planning and implementation efforts.
- Oppose the imposition of federal/state sanctions on local regions when their inability to attain federal/state standards is due to pollution from sources outside their regulatory authority.
- Support an increase in the statewide cap for Renewable Energy Self-Generation Bill Credit Transfer solar projects to allow counties to reduce carbon footprint and lower the cost of operations.
- Oppose legislation that would undermine governance of the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District.

Environmental Quality/Natural Resources

- Support the sovereignty of land use plans and ordinances to protect the people and the environment of Fresno County against encroachment by agencies acting outside their boundaries.
- Support State Endangered Species Act amendments that balance social and economic benefits with species protection and ensure that policies are based on peer reviewed scientific research.
- Support legislation to amend the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to add flexibility in the issuance of Exemptions with minor mitigation and/or project features that reduce impacts to a less than significant level.
- Support legislation that allocates funding to increase waste stream recycling and waste stream diversion. Support funding to implement SB 1383 and expanded exemptions from it for rural communities.
- Support legislation that upholds flow-control of solid waste generated within the County.
- Support funding for the implementation of the State's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.

General Government and Finance

- Support further reforms in the State-local fiscal relationship that will improve the County's ability to fund and efficiently administer both mandated and discretionary services.
- Support legislation and regulatory guidelines that facilitate and fully fund County administration of State-mandated programs.

- Support legislation that would hold counties harmless for implementation of State-only requirements that result in Federal sanctions and oppose legislation that requires counties to share in Federal sanctions.
- Oppose legislation that creates mandates without adequate State funding sources to implement them.
- Oppose legislation that reduces governmental immunities from liability. Support legislation that increases governmental immunities from liability.
- Oppose legislation, proposed regulations and administrative rulings that usurp local control and authority.
- Oppose legislation that limits the County's authority to provide services in the most efficient, effective way to their residents, including the County's authority to contract out for services.
- Support reforms that will promote accountability in program performance at the State and local level.
- Support legislation and regulatory guidelines that curb the theft and subsequent recycling of commercial metals.
- Support the reduction of administrative burdens for local government and those entities the County is mandated to regulate.
- Support the payment of interest by the State to counties on all delayed payments for State-mandated programs.
- Support State constitutional protection exempting counties from incurring any costs to carry out unfunded mandates.
- Support legislation that provides for the mitigation of costs associated with the termination of former State-mandated programs, including the costs incurred in litigating against efforts to require a county to continue to provide programs or services no longer mandated by the State.
- Oppose legislation and/or initiatives to implement a split roll property tax system.
- Support funding and State assistance to improve technology infrastructure resilience and assist in prevention, response, and mitigation of cyber-attacks against public entities.
- Support funding levels for local governments and State assistance for capital upgrades to County facilities to improve access to the public and increase efficiency in operations including environmentally conscious initiatives.
- Support legislation and funding that provides opportunities for cross-sector data exchange at the local and state levels.
- Support legislative reforms to establish reasonable caps on attorney fees and non-economic damages for civil filings against public entities, ensuring fair compensation for injured parties while preventing the diversion of taxpayer resources away from essential public services.

Housing and Homelessness

- Support increases in State funding that expand the County's capacity and local flexibility to address homelessness and housing instability, allowing resources to be tailored to the unique needs of each community.
- Support the streamlining of regulatory requirements for affordable housing programs, including reducing or eliminating prevailing wage requirements; as enforcing these requirements can increase the cost to build affordable housing.
- Support increases in State funding to provide essential infrastructure and housing funds for low- and moderate-income rural communities and residents.
- Support expansion of CalAIM Enhanced Care Management and Community Support eligible services to include medium-term rental assistance and other rapid rehousing services.
- Support an annual allocation of State funding to provide services to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Consistent homelessness funding will allow counties to plan for and deliver ongoing services to respond to homelessness.
- Support allocation of housing resources that prioritize individuals with severe mental health and substance use disorder needs.
- Support legislation that provides funding to preserve and expand the stock of affordable housing, including multi-family development, single-family development, and accessory dwelling units.
- Support legislation and programs that address the needs of housing for the farmworker and agricultural laborer community.
- Support simplification and standardization of housing and homelessness data collected by local jurisdictions for State programs.
- Support alignment of all State agencies with housing and homeless services funding under a single State Department to promote efficiencies across programs and simplification of requirements placed on local jurisdictions.
- Ensure Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) credit is attributed to the County for affordable housing for extremely low-income households (0 – 30% of local area median income) when County funding, programs, or land support units developed within incorporated cities.

Labor Relations and Employee Benefits

- Support reforms in employment laws to support charter counties' rights to establish their own terms and conditions of employment and employee relations, consistent with the collective bargaining process.
- Support legislative measures that reduce the financial burden of healthcare on both employers and employees, such as initiatives that aim to lower prescription drug prices and address high-cost treatments.
- Support Workers' Compensation reforms that will lower costs to employers, strengthen fraud protection and encourage timely file settlement, while delivering equitable benefits to employees.

- Support fair Medi-Cal reimbursements and state general fund appropriations for local hospitals in financial jeopardy.
- Support anti-garnishment law reform, allowing government employers to automatically enroll employees in deferred compensation plans.
- Implement enhanced oversight of the Independent Dispute Resolution (IDR) appeals process to deter the submission of fraudulent claims by physicians.

Land Use

- Support legislation that promotes local land use authority but does not mandate the formation of regional governance agencies.
- Oppose legislation that withholds local transportation and land use planning funds pending compliance with State-mandated regional land use and transportation planning efforts.
- Oppose attempts to override County land use plans and ordinances.
- Oppose any attempt by the State to usurp the County's authority to approve alternative energy projects.
- Support comprehensive housing element reform that recognizes the unique role of counties and oppose punitive funding approaches.
- Support public parks, including providing State funding for improvements to local and regional parks.
- Support new legislation on Supportive and Transitional Housing that allows local municipalities the authority to promote quality of care for clients as well as quality of life for the neighborhood these facilities are located in.

Library

- Support local publicly funded libraries, including providing funding for development of new and ongoing library programs, services, and facilities.
- Support legislation and budget actions that restore, protect, and enhance funding for the Public Library Foundation Program, the California Library Services Act and that provide grants and funding for land acquisition, land development, building maintenance and accessibility upgrades to existing urban and rural public libraries.

Public Health, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Health Care Services

- Support the allocation of increased State funding to local California Children's Services (CCS) programs, sufficient to ensure the provision of all currently mandated program elements.
- Support continued reform of health and welfare entitlement programs, provided that reforms do not shift additional cost burdens from the State to counties.
- Support annual adjustments in State payments to counties, including fee-for-service rate adjustments, that reflect the increased costs of administering mandated health and human services programs.

- Oppose State administrative or legislative actions that reduce the amount of Medicaid disproportionate share hospital funding or Medicaid safety-net care pool funding that California hospitals receive.
- Support legislation that increases reimbursement to hospitals and emergency ambulance providers and oppose legislation that reduces or eliminates reimbursement to hospitals and emergency ambulance providers or reduces local control of the emergency medical services system.
- Support legislation and funding that increases or supports the increase of hospital bed and other acute care facility capacities through modification of regulation and/or through the construction of additional infrastructure in disadvantaged/rural areas.
- Support State funding for construction of a medical school on the Central Valley's University of California campus.
- Support increased State funding for essential public health functions, including but not limited to monitoring community health; investigating health hazards; providing community outreach, education, expansion of communicable disease investigation and prevention capacity and linkages to critical services; regulating and enforcing food safety; implementing prevention programs such as immunizations, chronic disease, maternal, child and adolescent health; and other duly enacted laws designed to protect public health.
- Support allocation and reimbursement policies that fully fund and increase accessibility to public health, physical health care, mental health care, substance use disorder care, and preventative health services for all County residents. Support to increase the reimbursement rate paid to County Behavioral Health for Medi-Cal claimable Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System Services (DMC-ODS services).
- Support funding and State assistance for public health emergency preparedness, response, and recovery from natural and man-made disasters, such as extreme temperatures, flood, drought, pandemic disease, and bioterrorism.
- Support policies that 1) increase access to and consumption of fruits, vegetables, other healthy foods, and promote food waste reduction; and 2) are designed to encourage walking, biking, and linked transit systems.
- Support policies that promote tobacco-free environments, including prevention of electronic smoking device, smokeless tobacco product use, and the reduction of illegal tobacco sales to persons under the age of 21.
- Support funding and legislation aimed at a comprehensive approach to addressing the Opioid, fentanyl, and kratom epidemics.
- Support funding for home visitation services for women, children, and families, which provide crucial improvements to maternal and newborn health, school readiness/achievement, and family economic self-sufficiency.
- Support additional flexibility in Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) funding, while protecting BHSA funding to remain with counties to address local needs and flexibility to implement changes to BHSA as result of passed legislation.
- Support funding for the development of additional facilities to address mental health and substance use disorder treatment without a competitive grant application process required.

- Support legislation that allows Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) benefits to be continued for individuals in custody pending adjudication and that allows counties to be reimbursed for the cost of medical and behavioral health services provided at jails and juvenile justice facilities.
- Oppose legislative or State administrative actions to broaden county responsibilities for Lanterman Petris Short (LPS) conservatorship without adequately funding the services and expanded capacity that will be needed to serve more individuals at the local level, including impacts on both the behavioral health system and the Public Guardian's Office.
- Support additional State funding for services to address the growing mental health and substance use disorder crisis, including fully funding county costs for expanded mobile crisis and other crisis services organized and delivered through the county.
- Support expanded education, training and other workforce investments targeting the public behavioral health workforce needs in the Central Valley in recognition of the severe behavioral health workforce crisis.
- Oppose mandates or orders that usurp local authority requiring health or vaccination status as a condition of employment or access to services.
- Support legislation to regulate unlicensed biological research labs and support local authorities' powers to address labs as a nuisance or health concern.

Social Services

- Oppose State efforts to shift additional In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) costs to counties.
- Support healthcare policy implementation efforts that do not have an adverse financial impact to the County.
- Support State funding for general assistance programs as mandated in Section 17000 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.
- Support efforts that reduce administrative barriers for qualifying individuals to obtain and maintain participation in the CalFresh and Medi-Cal programs.
- Support efforts and sufficient funding to engage CalFresh and Medi-Cal clients who are required to complete certain activities, such as work or proof of exemption, in order to maintain benefits.
- Support statistically sound and equitable cost-sharing methodologies for CalFresh Payment Errors.
- Support efforts to address structural funding issues of administering the CalFresh program as a result of H.R. 1, which decreased federal share of cost from 50% to 25%.
- Support efforts and sufficient funding to reduce housing insecurity, promote employment opportunities, improve access to services and help clients and families achieve self-sufficiency.
- Support equitable and consistent funding to sufficiently support caseload growth, regulatory changes, training needs, and other related administrative costs.
- Support efforts that maintain local control over the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and support State efforts to promote/incentivize regional planning, service delivery, and administrative efficiencies.

- Support measures that enhance the overall quality, affordability, capacity, accessibility, and safety of childcare and development programs.
- Support efforts to increase funding and improve access to services and resources for veterans.
- Support workforce development efforts and funding to expand capacity for social worker programs.
- Support new study on Child Welfare Services workload recommendations that updates the results from studies required by Senate Bill 2030 (Chapter 785, Statutes of 1998).
- Support legislation that increases and protects the safety of children who are victims of or at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation; as well as legislation that increases funding, services, home-based placement resources, and support to caregivers of these victims.
- Support efforts to seek out additional funding for foster youth in Fresno County, local educational institutions and/or private partnerships through the State budget process and/or grants.
- Support efforts to increase State resources available and improve service delivery to adult services clients who are unable to live independently and the individuals that provide them with care.
- Support efforts to enhance funding, services and resources for seniors, older and dependent adults, and those who are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Support efforts to measure CalWORKs program outcomes based on family stability and well-being instead of work participation rate.
- Oppose efforts to cut CalWORKs barrier-removal programs that promote self-sufficiency and family well-being.

Transportation

- Support legislation that provides increased, stable, and equitable State funding for roads, highways, bridges, and public transit.
- Support legislation that promotes the timely development of local transportation projects at county's discretion.
- Support continued State funding and assistance formulas for grade separation projects.
- Support legislation that gives maintained roads additional weight in gas tax allocations.
- Support legislation that provides additional road maintenance fees from zero or low emission vehicles.
- Oppose legislation that shifts taxation from fuel sales taxes, which are constitutionally guaranteed for local transportation, to excise taxes, which are not similarly protected.

Water

- Support legislation to provide funding for building, repairing, upgrading, and maintaining water conveyance and levee and flood control systems in Fresno County.
- Support legislation that would fund and expedite the construction of surface water storage projects (e.g., dams, groundwater recharge facilities).

- Support legislation to fund, or provide low or no-interest loans, to upgrade water or wastewater infrastructure serving Fresno County residents including small, economically disadvantaged rural communities.

- Support legislation, regulations, and policy that allows flexibility to reduce/divert water flows into alternate water systems as needed in support of reducing flooding impacts as a result of atmospheric river conditions.

- Support legislation, regulation, and State funding that assists with the following:

    - Integrated Regional Water Management efforts;
    - Expediting regulatory approval, permitting, and development of groundwater recharge/banking programs and other programs and/or projects that support sustainable water resource management;
    - The implementation and administration of SB 1168, SB 1319, and AB 1739 (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act 2014);
    - Protection and preservation of surface water rights for our region including existing rights held on the San Joaquin River and Kings River watersheds; and
    - Utilizing best available science in the operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project to maximize the availability of surface water to our region.